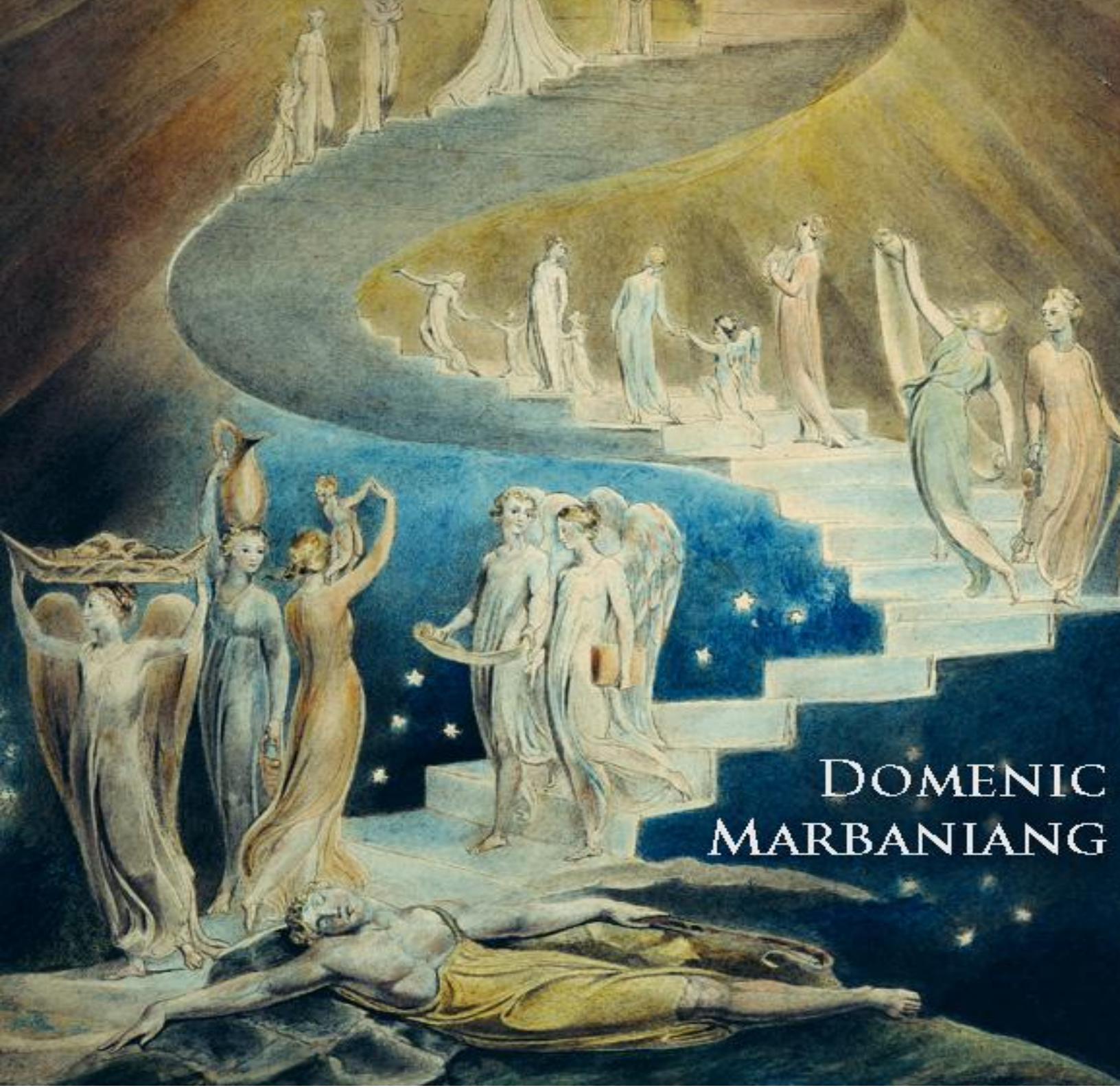


NOTES AND ESSAYS ON THEOLOGY



DOMENIC
MARBANLANG

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INTRODUCTION

MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE

The word “theology” comes from two Greek words *theos* and *logia*; *theos* means “God” and *logia* means “discourse” or “study”; thus, literally theology is nothing but a discourse or study of God. However, one cannot study God like one studies a plant, a rock, or a storm; because, God is invisible and there are various beliefs about Him. “Beliefs” is the key word. People form beliefs about God based on various reasons. Some accept beliefs that are passed down through tradition; others question these beliefs and come to different conclusions; a few more others flow with what the popular wave of public opinion of their day. However, not every belief is true; and two conflicting beliefs cannot both be true. The fact is that any belief that is not true is a false belief and it can be dangerous. In fact, what one believes about God has great impact on how one’s lifestyle and even role in society would be. What a social group believes about God determines what they would do collectively.

Take for instance, a social group that believes that God desires them to annihilate the “non-believers” (or “contra-believers”, i.e. those who do not adhere to their belief-system). Imagine the consequences. On the other hand, consider a social group that believes that God desires them to become isolated from society and live a monastic lifestyle of non-violence and asceticism. What would be the results? But, just imagine a group that believes that God doesn’t exist and men must determine what becomes of the world. What would become of such a society? Evidently, what one believes about God has deep consequences. And, so a study of theology becomes very vital.

Sources

Various religions have scriptures or traditions as their primary source of theology. The primary source of Christian theology is the Bible. However, there are various interpretations of the Bible and so there are also varied theologies like Roman Catholic Theology, Lutheran Theology, Reformed Theology, Renewal Theology, Liberal Theology, Liberation Theology, Feminist Theology, and several others. Which of them is a valid interpretation must be wisely discerned by the reader. However, systematic theologians would usually attempt to answer the major objections to their interpretation. Also, in the process it will become clear how Christian theology is different from beliefs of various other religions.

Criteria

There is a simple three-fold criterion for evaluating the validity of a theological interpretation:

- (a) Hermeneutical Accuracy. Theology must not violate the rules of interpretation in general (i.e., rules of interpretation that we use to understand the various genre of literature in general).
- (b) Internal Consistency. Theology should not have elements that contradict each other.
- (c) Practical Significance. Theology must be relevant to life situations and help people to live meaningfully. It must answer the very basic and foundational questions of life.

Content

In Systematic Theology, we study the doctrines of Scripture, God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, Creation, Man, Sin, Atonement, Salvation, Church, and the Last Things. There are other sub-topics to each of these that are studied accordingly.

Limits

Systematic Theology has its limitations. There is a story about Augustine of Hippo who once was deeply troubled because of his inability to fully understand the doctrine of Trinity. As he was walking on the seashore one day, he noticed a little boy running to the ocean with a small shell in hand; he would fill the shell with water and run back to a small hole on the beach which he would fill with the water. Augustine was intrigued and he asked the child what he was doing. The boy replied, "I'm trying to empty the ocean into this hole." "How can that be possible," asked Augustine, "since the ocean is so vast and your hole so little?" "Why not?" the child replied, "If you can try to understand the Trinity with your little mind, why can't I empty the ocean into this hole?" At that moment, Augustine realized that there are limits to theology itself.

WHAT IS THEOLOGY?

A simple and literal definition of "theology" would be "the science of divine things". It comes from two Greek words *theos* meaning "God" and *logia* meaning "discourse or speech". In modern times, it is the stream of knowledge that differentiates the secular pursuit of knowledge from the sacred one because of its starting point: all secular studies begin with reason and experience while theology begins with faith. The starting point for all extra-theological studies is the world (Latin: *saeculum*); the starting point for theology is the Word of God. So, while one may say that theology is the study of God, the factual definition would be that theology is the science that rationally pursues the understanding of the self-revelation of God in the Scriptures.

It would be interesting to note that many of the universities had originally begun as seminaries and theology was once known as the Queen of Sciences. However, with the dawn of the Age of Enlightenment and a progressive revolt against all supernaturalism, the chasm between theology and the secular disciplines became wide.

From the academic and professional point of view, theology is the discipline that is pursued by someone who is seriously interested in entering full-time Christian ministry, having sensed the call of God. Generally, it is pursued as a study course in a Seminary; however, there are also those who aren't able to attend a Seminary, so their chief means of education is through academic publications by experts in the various fields of theology. The biblical importance of such disciplined study is evident from the following Scriptures:

The Old Testament

Priest: "For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts." (Malachi 2:7)

King: "his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night." (Psalm 1:2).

The New Testament

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth.**" (2Timothy 2:15, emphasis mine)

And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the **acknowledging of the truth**; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will. (2Timothy 2:24-26, emphasis mine)

Apparently, a study (knowledge) of the Law had to precede the application and execution of the Law. One must be a student of the Word of Truth before one can be a teacher of the Word of Truth. A Christian minister without theological education is like a medical doctor without medical education or a lawyer without knowledge of the Law. It is simply an impossible state of being. Knowledge and practice go together; and the Christian minister is specifically called to the ministry of the Word (a teaching/discipleship responsibility).

And the twelve summoned the body of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." (Act 6:2-4)

Christ had spent three and half years to teach and disciple the Apostles not in order that they would become caterers of food, but in order that they would teach others what they themselves had learnt from Christ.

Of course, the quality of the education process also matters a lot. A medical doctor with a wrong education could cause havocs. A pilot without aeronautics (or proper application of the science) can cause death to his passengers. It is with a sad note that we read something like this:

"When the rule of Rehobo'am was established and was strong, he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him." (2Chronicles 12:1)

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; **because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me.** And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children." (Hosea 4:6, emphasis mine)

In summary, by "theology" we understand the science and discipline required for a proper execution of the ministry of the Word. In modern times, the Seminary provides the best resources for the pursuit of this discipline; however, a person can also avail of scholarly publications geared for theological knowledge. Yet, theology is simply a tool that is lifeless when not combined with practical faith and proper application. Even the devil has lot of theological information, but he is the devil simply because he can't have faith in the Truth; he chose to be the father of lies. Theology devoid of faith is diabolical.

Theology Vs Heresy

It is important here to establish the difference between theology in its pure form and heresy, which is its corruption. A heresy is a corruption of dogma and departure from biblical faith through invalid argumentations on scripture. The Apostles warned against heretics who usually corrupt truth because of sensual mindedness and illogical twisting of scriptures.

"in which [i.e. in the epistles of Paul] are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures." (2Peter 3:16)

"But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit." (Jude 17-19)

A study of Historical Theology will show that the rise of a heretical viewpoint would usually draw the saints together to sharp discussion on what the Bible truly teaches. Thus, through logical reflection and proper application of hermeneutic (interpretation) principles, they would give

formulated expression to a doctrinal truth that wasn't propositionally stated earlier. For instance, in the third century, when a Bishop called Arius began to teach that Jesus was not God but was a created being, a proper and systematic study of the Bible helped the other Church leaders oppose his teaching and give formulated expression to the doctrine of Trinity.

Thus, we see that heresy has its origins in people who are not only "untaught" but also are "unstable" and "sensual". In other words, on the contrary, proper training, stability or rootedness in sound doctrine, and spirituality are essential to a servant of God so that he/she can "rightly divide the word of truth."

DIVISIONS OF THEOLOGY

The chief theological divisions are four in number:

1. Biblical Theology: It is a study of the theology of the Old Testament and the New Testament involving also a study of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. It involves exegetical studies of the biblical text in the original languages.

Old Testament Theology is usually divided into six periods: Theology of the (1) Edenic Era (2) Noahic Era (3) Patriarchal Era (4) Mosaic Era (5) Monarchical Era and (6) Prophetic Era.

New Testament Theology is usually divided into seven thoughts: Theology of (1) the Synoptics (2) Acts (3) James (4) Paul (5) Hebrews (6) Peter and Jude (7) John.

2. Historical Theology: It is a study of Church History and the historical development of theological concepts, teaching, and confessions. It also studies the histories of theologies and dogmatics. The main divisions are (1) Ancient Theology (1st Century-A.D. 590), (2) Medieval Theology (A.D. 590-1517), (3) Reformation Theology (1517-1750), (4) Modern Theology (1750-Present) which also involves study of Contemporary theologies such as Liberal Theology (which usually doesn't accept the infallibility of Scriptures, sin, atonement, and the Second Return), Neo-Orthodox Theology (which emphasizes on personal faith above propositional theology and doesn't regard historicity and infallibility of Bible as important), Radical Theology (treats Biblical accounts as mythological and assumes an atheistic texture), Liberation Theologies (Black, Feminist, Dalit, etc that look for socio-economic emancipatory themes in Biblical Theology), and Postliberal or Narrative Theology (that emphasizes on narratives above propositions and doctrine).

An understanding of the historical developments and contexts of theological formulations helps one to see a theological viewpoint in its proper perspective. At the same time, one also notices how theological viewpoints can be largely influenced by training, stability of faith, and spiritual experience. Lack of these can highly damage a theological viewpoint and stray into worldly philosophizing.

3. Systematic Theology: It is a systematic and logical presentation of the content of Christian faith (dogmatics) and the foundation of the Christian way of life (ethics). The chief disciplines within it are Apologetics (defense of faith which also involves studies in philosophy and religion), Dogmatics (content of faith), and Christian ethics. The chief divisions are Bibliology (Doctrine of the Bible), Theology Proper (Doctrine of God), Christology (Doctrine of Christ), Pneumatology

(Doctrine of the Holy Spirit), Angelology and Demonology (Doctrine of Angels and Demons), Cosmology (Doctrine of Creation), Anthropology and Hamartiology (Doctrine of Man and Sin), Soteriology (Doctrine of Salvation), Ecclesiology (Doctrine of the Church), and Eschatology (Doctrine of Last Things).

Theology has usually been systematized with regard to dogmatic perspectives into various systems of Dogmatic Theology, some of which are as follows (1) *Catholic Theology* (theology of the Roman Catholic Church) (2) *Calvinistic or Reformed Theology* (emphasizes Sovereignty of God, Predestination, Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of Saints), (3) *Arminian Theology* (emphasizes on Freewill, Original Sin, and Universal Atonement, and personal responsibility), (4) *Covenant Theology* (views theology from the perspective of God's Covenant of Works with Adam and His Covenant of Grace with the Elect. Some also talk of the Covenant of Redemption, but it is not to be considered different from the Covenant of Grace), (5) *Dispensational Theology* (that looks at theology from the perspective of God's division of human history into various dispensations of time emphasizing on salvation by grace through faith. The literal method of interpretation and maintaining a distinction between the Church and the nation of Israel are crucial to Dispensational Theology), (6) *Renewal (Pentecostal/Charismatic) Theology* (emphasizes on the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the spirit-filled life, the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit, and Power Evangelism).

In recent times, advocates of *Narrative Theology* have expressed dissatisfaction with systematization of biblical revelation into propositions or dogmas. However, one understands that the statements of faith and the propositions of Truth revealed by God cannot be disregarded. God's revelation is both personal and propositional.

With regard to classing Apologetics as a discipline of Systematic Theology, I think Mortimer J. Adler was right to a great extent when he observed that the Natural Theology that Systematic Theologians talk about is nothing but apologetics from a Christian vantage point. It is not pagan at all, despite the fact that it makes use of natural reason to defend the faith of Scripture. However, there is another stream of Theology that is closely connected to the Philosophy of Religion, and it is called Philosophical Theology. Philosophical Theology, according to Adler, differs from Sacred or Dogmatic Theology in the sense that it is a theology based on philosophical reasoning rather than on the revelation of God. It is usually pagan in its origin and purely philosophical in nature. Thus, whenever a Christian theologian attempts to provide a rational basis for a theological tenet of faith, he engages not in philosophical theology but in apologetics and, what is generally known as, natural theology.

4. Practical Theology: It is the theological study of ministerial practice. The chief disciplines within it are Worship (Liturgy), Sermon (Homiletics), Pastoral Care (Poimenik), Community Care (Diakonie), Administration and Leadership (Cybernetics), Educational Work in School and Community (Pedagogy of Religion), and Missiology (A study of the nature, history, purpose, and procedure of Missions).

WHICH THEOLOGY IS RIGHT?

This question is often asked with reference to dogmatic theologies and some of the contemporary theologies. There are, at least, three chief criteria to judging the validity of

methodology and argumentation of a theology:

1. Self-Consistency. Theological study is a peculiar discipline in its own right. It has its own methodology, source of information, and objectives. One can't apply the historical method to biology. One doesn't study plants and animals in order to study history. Similarly, any method of theological study that doesn't conform to proper and practical theological principles of research is inconsistent to its very nature. For example, Science is basically materialistic and deterministically oriented. Therefore, supernatural events and miracles cannot be accepted by it (as they fall beyond its range of possibilities). Of course, one cannot dissect the divine in a laboratory room. Attempting to apply science (in its materialistic and deterministic form) to Bible can result in unnatural consequences. A theology that doesn't naturally conform to its nature is unnatural and false. Also, we have stated earlier that theology begins with the Bible. Therefore, any theology that has undermined or undervalued the Bible has actually cut away the branch on which it was sitting. It is lost.

At the same time, consistency also means that the argumentation (interpretation) is not fallacious and doesn't commit logical blunders but is consistent throughout. It must be consistent in form and nature.

2. Doctrinal Coherence. Truth in essence cannot be diversified. It is a unity. Therefore, theological conclusions cannot contradict known truths. It must be able to produce a coherent worldview of true beliefs about God, the world, man, sin, salvation, and final things.

3. Practical Consequences. Jesus said that a tree is known by its fruits. Similarly, a theology is known by the results it produces. What kind of a believer does it produce? How is it profitable for the Church as the Body of Christ? Are its conclusions practical? The Scripture is not given for vain speculation but for spiritual edification.

Finally, one must remember that theology is only the study of and interpretation of divine truths communicated in Scripture. Therefore, it is not exhaustive and terminal. The study continues.

NATURE AND GOAL OF THEOLOGY

Definition

The word "theology" means the Science of God or the Study of God. It is the religious systematization of such beliefs as that involve God and the viewing of the universe with such a theology of God. Thus, it also involves every such doctrine in the universe that streams from or streams towards God, e.g., anthropology, soteriology, etc. Basically, it is the study of the divine things.

Ground

Deciding a starting point for theology is often dilemmatic. Should it be Scripture, nature, experience, or God Himself?

The theologian attempting to develop a systematic treatment of Christian theology early encounters a dilemma regarding the question of starting point. Should theology begin with the

idea of God, or with the nature and means of our knowledge of him? In terms of our task here, should the doctrine of God be treated first, or the doctrine of Scripture?"[1]

The dilemma is more intensified by the intrusion of evidentialism, which may even endanger the concept of absolute God. Some would have professed the ground of philosophical deduction from nature, as did Aquinas, to be more appropriate, and later conform to the picture of the Scriptures.

Theology builds around the three fundamental doctrines of *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone), *sola gratia* (grace alone), and *sola fide* (faith alone).[2]

Development by Function

Theology develops by functioning in the following three areas:

Cogitation. Philosophical and experiential reflection, as, some believe, Paul had opportunity to during his prison terms. The revelation, illuminated, is systematized.

1. **Clarification.** This is to clarify the meaning of certain terms of theology that may have come to be used, but inadequately, e.g. "substance" or "subsistence", "there was a time" or "there was" etc.

2. **Counteraction.** This is the development of theology by opposing the heretical controversies, the statement of the counteraction being vouchsafed crystallizingly in creeds and dogmas.

Goal

The goal of all theology must be soundness of doctrine (faith) and thus the edification of the believer. The quest must be for clarity and consistency of truth. It must not be an abstract, rationalizing specter but a life changing, living experience. Theology must not just remain a map of guidance but, becoming relevant to life, become an experience entailing life-transformation. The goal of theology is and must remain the preservation and systematization of Biblical Truth, truth that sets one free.

PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

We all know that philosophy influences the doing or making of theology to a great extent.

Augustine (354-430), Clement, and Origen (c.185-254) were well influenced by Platonism. Augustine is considered to be "one of the great Christian Platonists." [3] Diogenes Allen notes:

Both he (that is, Augustine) and Gregory of Nyssa (d.394) as well as other theologians of the fourth and fifth centuries began to use the ideas of Plotinus about the three divine hypostases to gain a deeper understanding of God. The modifications they made to Plotinus are vital, and they arise because of Christian doctrine. The Christian doctrine of creation in particular made it impossible for them to think in terms of *degrees* of divinity. There is a sharp division between the Creator and all else in Christianity.[4]

Thus we see how Plotinus influenced Augustine's and Gregory's theology. Plotinus, believing in cosmic unity or non-dualism, founded Neo-Platonism. Though Augustine et al made use of certain thoughts of his they were careful to maintain the distinction of the Creator from the

creation. Pantheism could not be permissible. A certain amount of Plotinism may be found in writers such as Paul Tillich. Aquinas and the leaders of the Scholastic movement were greatly influenced by the natural theology and logic of Aristotle (384-322 BC).

In the Indian continent, the influence of Indian philosophy on Christian theology is expressive in the writings of Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya (1861-1907, Advaita Philosophy), A. J. Appasamy (1891-1979, Vishishta advaita), and P. Chenchiah (1886-1959, Yogic evolutionism).[5]

Thus, we have seen theology in action in the philosophical context.

The quest of Augustine, Aquinas, Brahmabandhav, Appasamy, Chenchiah, etc is clearly seen to be that of achieving a greater and deeper experiential knowledge of God. For once the mind experiences something, it is not an impossibility for the heart to experience the same. But these theologians prove that their theology didn't just flip over their minds. The heart was also involved; as Augustine put it:

Thou awakest us to delight in Thy praise; for Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, until it repose in Thee.[6]

The goal of such philosophical theology was not just explanation and justification with notable competence, but also quest to know God experientially. Whenever philosophy erred in achieving that goal there was segregation.

It is noticeable that theology has never erupted on a virgin soil. There needs to be some background to the understanding of it.

THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

The gospel which is not significant and relevant to the human need of the moment is worthless. It is like bringing a cup of the choicest wine to a person who is direly in thirst for a cup of water. The theology of Christianity must be relevant and meaningful to the believer. It should serve to give him that which would help his spiritual life grow, not just junk food. It should instill in him life.

Theology is significant. The Bible doesn't just talk of abstract things. It speaks of concrete, relevant issues. So must Biblical theology be. Historical theology, Biblical theology, Exegetical theology, Philosophical theology, and Systematic theology must serve, not just give a junk of thoughts, reflections, ideas of Truth, but must present the Truth so significantly that the person being united to this Truth is set free from error and estrangement from God.

The person who comes to Christ after listening to the Gospel (soteriology) comes so because he finds the doctrine significant. The God of the philosophers may be abstract, but the God of Christian experience is a friend, a father, one with whom we can relate, one to whom we can pray, one with whom we can walk, talk, and share our deepest feelings and desires, one to whom we can commit. Theology brings the Truth significantly home, that God is a Person to know, to love, to obey. "Knowing God is crucially important" said J.I. Packer.

The Bible is interpreted according to an existent world-view. The terms and ideas are influenced. That's how we got a Roman Catholic Theology, Indian Christian Theology, an Existential Theology, a Black Theology, etc. Often it's a desire for revolution, for freedom from the old, stale, tyrannous theology (e.g. feminist theology). The desire is for theology to be made alive; the vitalization of theology from human existence.

During the ages of renaissance and enlightenment, Western theology underwent great changes which consequently led to its death.[7] The root of all this lies in the scholastical movement following Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). Space won't suffice to trace the lengthy process of decay. But following are some points to note:

1. Aristotelian influence was purely logical and quite nature-oriented. The stress of rationalism and scientism in contradiction to Platonic, mysticism and spirituality. The laws of nature emphasized.
2. The rise of rationalism when Aquinas posited that natural theology is possible and Faith is to be distinguished from reason. What cannot be accepted by reason (which is natural) must be accepted by faith in the Scripture.
3. This proved to be blind. Some desired total rationalism in contradiction to so-called blind faith. Natural theology popularized.
4. The God of Christianity began to become an abstract being with no great significance for humans. This was effected by the problem of theodicy. Miracles were considered untenable, impossible. Thus, the fixity of natural laws was popularized.
5. The introduction of skepticism, empiricism, and pragmatism by philosophers such as Descartes, John Locke, William James etc aggravated the Western climate.
6. The advance of science, the stupendous discoveries and inventions unleashed an era of materialism and scientism. The greatest blow was the theory of evolution by Darwin in the Origin of species.
7. Nietzsche announced the death of God.
Theology died. God became insignificant. Marx, Hitler, Mussolini, Lenin, Stalin resulted. Man tried to become God at last, the wisdom of the serpent.

The modern climate is such a tensified one where the schools, universities, and political systems are plagued by such materialistic concepts all because Christianity did not take a stand for the Gospel; because this Church tried to exalt its rational mind above the experience of god. Theology was not kept alive.

Some revolutions must be noted: monasticism, mysticism, Pietism, Pentecostalism—all who tried to keep the flame of Theology alive in their hearts by separation from the world (the natural) and dedicating to God (the Supernatural, the divine).

THEOLOGY AND FAITH

Whereas philosophy, beginning with the nature and pure rational-empirical deductivism, tries to understand the world logically, Theology, beginning with the revelation of God and experience, tries to know oneself in relation to the Creator by faith.

The dictum stands true: the just shall live by faith (Rom.1:17). The Christian is to walk by faith – faith based on past experience and sufficient reason.

Now, faith is man's response to God's revelation.

...it means both assent to what God has said about his redemptive purposes for man and obedience to the demands stated. The first is faith as reasonable, and is concerned with truth – belief that. The second is faith as commitment, as concerned with obedience – belief in.[8]

The truth of God is not abstract theory. It is a gospel which has truth – content, to be sure, but which above all is a claim upon us. It is a call for trust, commitment, and obedience. In his commentary on Romans C.H. Dodd states that, for the apostle Paul, "Faith is that attitude in which, acknowledging our complete insufficiency for any of the high ends of life, we rely utterly on the sufficiency of God..." Nor does it mean belief in a proposition, though doubtless intellectual beliefs are involved when we come to think it out.[9]

Theology can be alive as Christ is alive in a believer and a believer in Christ. Now, Christ is alive in us by faith (Eph.3:17) and we are alive in Christ through our actions in commitment of faithfulness to Him (Jn.15:1-12).

Theology too can thus be alive in one's life – by faith in action or active faith.

The English language handicaps us when we try to speak of faith. It gives us no verb form of the word.... The Greek verb *pistuo* and the Latin verb *credo* permitted writers and speakers to say, "I trust, I commit myself, I rest my heart upon, I pledge allegiance." All of these paraphrases show us that faith is a *verb*; it is an active mode of being and committing, a way of moving into and giving shape to our experiences of life. They also show us that faith is always *relational*; there is always *another* in faith. "I trust *in* and am loyal to..."[10]

J.I. Packer points out that knowing God (theology) is life.

What were we made for? To know God. What aim should we set ourselves in life? To know God. What is the "eternal life" that Jesus gives? Knowledge of God. "This is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent (Jn.17:3)."[11]

[1] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Michigan, Baker Book House, 1996), p.30

[2] H. Wayne House, *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine* (Michigan: Zondervan, 1992), p.4

[3] Diogenes Allen, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology* (Georgia: John Knox Press, 1985), p.82

[4] *Ibid*, p.82

[5] Cf. "Development of Christian Theology in India" by J. Russel Chandran in *Readings in Indian Christian Theology I*, ed. R.S. Sugirtharajal and Cecil Hargreaves (Delhi: ISPCK, 1997), pp.7-10.

[6] *The Confessions*.

[7] Nietzsche announced the death of God with the uprise of rationalism and scientism. The fact was that theology was insignificant. With the death of God, theology also died.

[8] *Exploring our Christian Faith*, ed. W.T. Purkiser (Missouri: BHP of Kansas City, 1978), p.25

[9] *Ibid*, pp.25-26

[10] James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith* (NY: Harper San Francisco, 1978), p.16

[11] J.I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Illinois: InterVarsity, 1973), p.29

DRIVERS OF THEOLOGIES

Systematic theologies usually begin either with Theology Proper (the Doctrine of God) or Bibliology (the Doctrine of Revelation). The Classical method (chiefly of the rationalists) was to begin with the doctrine of God, first by establishing the existence of God through some rational argumentation. On the other hand, the Fideist method held that theology didn't need to begin with reason at all; theology began from the Bible, God's self-revelation to humanity. So, they usually began with establishing first the doctrine of divine revelation, i.e. with Bibliology.

But, the inescapable problem again emerges: to try to establish the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible based on its own self-testimony would mean engaging in the informal question-begging fallacy: "I believe that the Bible is true because it is God's Word, and what it says about itself as being God's Word is true." A question-begging fallacy doesn't establish anything; it is like a man who tries to get higher by climbing over his own parachute. The external-evidence issue seems crucial at such moments. However, people like Plantinga have argued that this needn't be the case. Internal evidences and testimonies equally count as valid, especially when they qualify as basic beliefs. Blaise Pascal had gone further to state that rationalism itself was founded upon a faith on reason; or else, what credibility does reason possess than itself in order to avoid the circular argument? Thus, the reductionism of sources to themselves seems unavoidable.

Thus, the disagreement is more about being rational than about being dogmatic. In his *Escape from Reason*, Schaeffer tried to historically demonstrate that the focus on the superiority of reason could hijack theology and cut it off from true faith. The sequential departure of systematic theologies from Faith in the West, especially following the Enlightenment was quoted as illustrative of the lower storey eating up of the upper storey (natural theology eating up revelatory theology). This progress of estrangement was arrested by the anti-liberal neo-orthodox movement theologically super-headed by Barth and his group of theologians. The neo-orthodox theologians tried to snatch away theology from the hands of the liberals by re-affirming *sola fide* (faith alone) over both reason and historical experience.

On the other hand, historical evidentialism was another frame of reference that challenged both faith and reason to accommodate to it; thus, we find the emergence of responses like Bultmann's demythologizationism and Chalmer's gap theory. People like Whitehead attempted to take the rationalist line and wed reason to history; others like Pannenberg wove revelation into history. In recent times, narrative theologians have decided to do away with the rational dimension of theology altogether; another example of the rational-empirical conflict. But, certainly the solution to the conflict doesn't lie in opting for one over the other. Zeno's paradoxes are not solved by choosing empirical phenomena above rational analysis, or vice versa.

The nature of a theological enterprise usually determines the method of doing theology. For instance, an apologetic kind of theology would seek to construct theology in a way that Faith is heavily guarded and defended. However, the irony is that apologetic theology is not primary theology at all. It comes after Faith has been meticulously adumbrated by a previous theological enterprise. Dogmatic theology, on the other hand, proceeds from sole belief in the Scriptures and uses the exegetical method, though at times the pendulum swings to extremities in order to combat the prevalent concepts of theology that the dogmatist considers to be false; in this light, we can understand Calvin's opposition of anything that the Catholic can use to accentuate the

primacy of the Pope, including the doctrine of the continuity of the charismatic gifts (Calvin said that the healing gift didn't continue; the papacy was only misleading the masses by claiming that the gift continued). Utilitarian theologies only try to use theological categories for the proclamation of philosophically constructed ideas. Such utilitarian theologies don't derive theology from the Scriptures but read the Scriptures in light of secular philosophy (See Thieselton, *Two Horizons*). But, real theology is not eisogetic (reading into the text) but exogetic (reading out of the text). Systematic theologies have to choose between epistemic assumptions: whether to begin from reason, from experience, or from faith. To people like Aquinas, the rational becomes important and reasoning is the method; to those like Sadhu Sundar Singh, the empirical is prior and narrative is the method; to those like Calvin, faith is prior and exegesis is the method.

Yet, one cannot even regard the dogmatic to be foolproof. The dogmatist vision is also colored by certain prejudices that s/he uses to resolve conflict of statements in the Bible. For instance, in the Calvinist doctrine, the foundation is the doctrine of Sovereignty of God and of His grace. Thus, wherever scriptural statements are in conflict, the arbitrator is the dogmatic basic; but, where the conflict is with science, reason, or history, the dogmatist chooses dogma over science. But, what is the basis of this dogma? It is not always right to also go by the popularity appeal (for instance, that if there are more texts to support a particular doctrine, then the conflict of passages is resolved by majority consensus—this is fallacious, seeing that one evidence is enough to falsify a theory). Also, dogmatism might become the rationale for blind faith—people of conflicting faiths may have no common platform to discuss their claims. However, the neo-orthodox theologians have argued that dogmatism is not blind when it comes to the Scriptures, because Scriptures are self-authenticating to the one who encounters God in the Word. But, again, that only allows full room for other conflicting claims to assert themselves as subjectively self-authenticating. The empiricists, however, anticipate conflicts, not just among faiths but also in Scripture; to them the idea of uniformity of revelation is not axiomatic; thus, theological conflict and dialecticism is anticipated—absolute dogma is impossible. But, if absolute truth doesn't exist with regard to doctrine, then pluralism will become inevitable, in face of which theology becomes non-sensical; therefore, the modern quest for the narrative.

Obviously, attempting to emphasize any one of the three sources of knowledge (reason, experience, or revelation) over the others makes theological construction off-balanced. Divine revelation comes in empirical language and submits to the laws of reason. A verbal testimony that doesn't submit to the rules of logic becomes linguistically meaningless and, as such will not qualify as revelation at all. Therefore, our construction of theology must carefully use both the eyes of reason and experience in order to see the revelation of God.

THE LURE OF PRAGMATIC THEOLOGY

Pragmatism is the philosophy that basically states that anything that works is true; if not essentially, then at least functionally. It is the dominant philosophy of the modern age. This has had an adverse effect on theological thinking as well. For instance, one would argue that a particular man's teachings cannot be false since the results prove that the teachings work.

However, unless an essential connection between the fruit and the tree can be established,

such embracement of theologies based on empirical results can be dangerous. Let's look at a few considerations now:

1. God's use of a practice in an exceptional case doesn't entail His acceptance of its theoretical backings. There are a number of instances in the Bible where God is seen to be using the very systems that He explicitly denounced. For instance, just because God used a medium to speak to Saul doesn't prove that God has finally accepted the practice of consulting the dead and the demonic doctrines associated with it. Similarly, just because God used a star to speak to the wise men, during Jesus' birth, doesn't prove that God commends astrology. Why He does that has its explanation within His own sovereign determinations. We only know this that Scripture is against sorcery, stargazing, and such occult arts. In the cases cited above, where God has communicated with people through the means He prohibited, we may understand that He communicated thus NOT BECAUSE of the practice, but DESPITE the practice; showing that He is in control of the world. His acts there only directly prove the falsity of those sciences that try to limit the world to just the natural. God's sign of the star shows that it is not the star that influences events; but that God used a star to signify an event that He is directly in control. Similarly, God sent Samuel to the amazement of the medium, evidently puzzling the expectations of her art, in order to act despite the falsehood of her system.

2. Any evidence (whether it is a prophetic prediction or a miraculous sign or wonder) on behalf of a doctrine that is explicitly opposed to the clear revelation of God is a deception. Sometimes the mind bypasses the evident fact of Scripture because of its craving for something else. This something else, the imagination powered by desire, becomes more real to the mind than reality. Then, deception is easy. Miracles or testimonies that try to teach a doctrine that is not clearly taught in the Scripture are not from God. In fact, God might have allowed them in order to test us to see if we will accumulate teachers according to our itching ears or listen to the true voice of the Spirit. Note the following verses in order:

"If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods'-- which you have not known-- and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. (Deu 13:1-3 NKJ)

But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. (Mat 12:39 NKJ)

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2Th 2:9-12 NKJ)

Many cults and occults are based on testimonies of supernatural happenings. Such testimonies try to substantiate a host of false teachings such as reincarnation, energy channelling, spiritism, etc. The testing point of the spirits is simple. The Bible specifies them. Few are stated below:

a. Any spirit that teaches false godliness is evil.

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. (1Ti 4:1-3 NKJ)

b. Any spirit that denies the divinity and humanity of Jesus (His incarnation, atoning death, and Lordship included) is evil.

"every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world." (1Jo 4:3 NKJ)

c. Any spirit that teaches any gospel other than that preached in the Bible is evil.

But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. (Gal. 1:8 NKJ)

Any claim to truthfulness of doctrine that is not based on the clear teaching of the Word of God, but on signs and wonders, testimonies of supernatural experiences, visitation by angels, dreams and visions, and the like is not biblical - it is not based on the Bible after all.

3. Just because many scriptural verses could be used to prove a system of doctrines (a dogmatic theology) doesn't entail that the system is true. There are some who are committed more to the systematic theology of a human teacher than to the Word of God. But, it is not necessary any systematic theology is perfect. God didn't invent systematic theology; it is man's invention; because, man desires to find a unity of understanding; but, moreover, he wants a system that could explain the hard sayings of scripture; within which every jot and tittle would find a sense. This is, in a sense, a form of scientific pragmatism. It is based on the observation-hypothesis-experimentation model. Scriptures are read, a hypothesis (theory) invented, and verses are sought to validate the hypothesis. However, like science, this inductive process might only help functionally in some areas. For instance, Newton's laws are functionally helpful to explain and construct things on the terrestrial level; however, Einstein's laws are used for predictions and constructions related to the greater extra-terrestrial sphere. Yet, it is possible that both of them are not true.

A system has the power of twisting any text to suit itself. The trick lies in the way of interpretation. Thus, whatever text seems to fall in line is taken in and whatever seems to counter it is disregarded or explained away, sometimes in a way that begs the question and/or is closed to verification. A system that is closed is the most dangerous, as it anchors on the interpretation of the maker of the system rather than on the Word of God. Thus, if one hears someone quoting the sayings of Aquinas or Calvin more than quoting the Bible, that person is system anchored. This DOESN'T MEAN that one must not do systematic theology. However, it is dangerous to idolize systematic theology and then use it to interpret Scripture; rather than allowing the Scripture to speak to us face to face. One must be open to the Truth or else one will not be set free.

Does this mean that there are no absolutes? Of course, not. One can't deny the existence of absolutes without making an absolute statement himself. Only an absolute statement can negate an absolute; and that is a contradiction in terms. What is denied here is the validity of the pragmatic method. Just because a system works (in the understanding of many scriptures and one's personal experiences) doesn't prove its authenticity.

There were systems in Jesus' days, the Pharisees and the Sadducees being prominent. They prided in their interpretation of Scriptures, that very diametrically opposed to each other. Jesus condemned both of them as false and man made.

4. Just because a doctrine makes sense doesn't prove that it is right. There are many false things that falsely make sense to people and so the world is filled with so many apologists, of contradictory systems to each other, who find absolute sense in the doctrines that they defend. For instance, it made sense to people earlier that the sun rose and set over the earth. The theory worked to a great extent. However, it was only phenomenally (in appearance) true; but, not absolutely so. That the earth was flat made absolute sense to the ancients; to us, it is nonsense. Why people believe may be a question that psychology would try to answer; however, what belief is justified falls under the domain of philosophy. And, the dividing line must not be confused. There are some who argue that because there are certain things that make sense to a person; a person is justified in holding those beliefs. If that could be allowed, philosophy of law and jurisprudence, ethics, and politics would go berserk. A person can read the Bible and find a particular sense out of it, subjectively very satisfying - for instance, the Sadducees were very satisfied with the belief that there were no spirits. However, personal satisfaction is a utilitarian experience; it is not the essential qualification of truth.

So, what is the best way of doing theology, then? We'll conclude this by answering this question by quoting excerpts from an article on the qualifications of learning the truth based on Paul's exhortation to Timothy in 2Timothy 3.

ESSENTIALITIES OF TRUTH PERCEPTION

1. Moral Commitment to Pursuit of Truth (vv. 1-5).

Those who wish to follow truth must make a commitment to obey it no matter what the consequences would appear to be. Only the ardent seeker will find. [This commitment is missing in these last days of pragmatism, relativism, skepticism, and libertinism]

2. Critical Mind-set (v. 6).

Gullibility is a dangerous evil. It usually follows a will-against-truth-towards-pleasure. The credulous are easily deceived. One must weigh things before submitting to them. [False teachers take advantage of the gullible]

3. Truth-Orientation (v. 7).

All learning must be with the goal to know the truth, and not to heighten skepticism. Questions must lead to knowledge; not end in doubt. Too much of learning without any earning of wisdom is a wild chase after the wind (Ecclesiastes).

4. Faith (v. 8).

All knowledge is founded on faith. Faith is the lock of assurance, the ground of knowledge. Unless one has faith, one can't know anything. [The natural man cannot accept the things of the Spirit, for they are spiritually discerned]

5. Action (v.9).

Truth is wisdom; wisdom, truth. To possess truth means to believe the truth and act it out. The time test will reveal what is wisdom and what is not. The fruit of truth is wisdom; the fruit of rebellion, folly.

[Jesus said in John 7:17: "If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority." Also in John 3:20-21, He says, "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."]

6. Example (vv. 10-13).

Following the example of truth in the lives of people. Truth is livable; not just some theoretical conjecture about reality. If you can't live it out; you can't hold it on either - practically speaking. Followers of falsehood exemplify a deceptive lifestyle; followers of truth, a godly one.

7. Continuation in the Word (vv. 14-17).

The Scripture of God, given by the inspiration of God, is the source of all divine truth. It is the authority in matters of doctrine and faith. It makes one wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (faith is important, v.15). It is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

BIBLIOLOGY

The Bible is a Book of 66 books written by various divinely led authors at different geographical location at different times in history (Heb.1:1). It is made up of the Old Testament and the New Testament. The OT has 39 books and the NT has 27 books. It's easy to remember the number by means of this mnemonic: if we understand that the word "Old" and "New" both have 3 letters, and the word "Testament" has 9 letters; so, OT=3,9=39; NT=3x9=27.

The Bible is God's Book of instruction for salvation through the faith of Jesus Christ (2Tim.3:15). It was written by holy men of God who were moved by the prophetic anointing of the Holy Spirit (Heb.1:1; 2Pet.1:20,21). It is, therefore, called the inspired Word of God (2Tim.3:16). The Bible cannot be understood in a worldly manner. The instruction of salvation is communicated to us through the Holy Spirit (1Cor. 2:10-16). Therefore, an unspiritual person can neither understand nor appreciate spiritual things. The Bible is the only infallible guide of divine instruction for man (Rev. 22:6).

The Bible or Scriptures testify about Jesus Christ (Jn. 5:29; Gal.3:8); therefore, it is said that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev.19:10). The believer is called to read and study the Scriptures (Ps.1:2). The Bible warns against Scripture twisting and against adding to or subtracting from the Scriptures (2Pet.3:16; Rev.22:18,19).

THEOLOGY OF REVELATION

A study of the Bible shows that authentic revelation is chiefly verbal. By this is not meant that visions, dreams, theophanies, miracles, and spiritual understanding have not been means of divine communication. What is meant is that revelation comes in an authentic, reliable, and knowable form only through verbal communication. Even in visions, dreams, and supernatural phenomena what ultimately constitutes revelation is verbal testimony.

General Revelation Vs Revelation as Verbal Testimony

Nature cannot be revelatory of God in the same way that a watch is revelatory of a watch maker. Still in the case of the watch, one can have no idea of the specific watch maker, unless first of all he already knows the watchmaker or the watchmaker has inscribed his name on the watch. As far as nature is concerned, for some it *may* point to a Creator initially, but if the reasoning is taken to its logical conclusion then an entanglement in cosmology and ontology only proves to be a rational vexation. Reason cannot bridge the gap between necessity and contingency, infinity and finitude, immutability and mutation. This is evident from a study of religious theologies all over the world.

Man confronts nature in the same manner that he confronts any object of the world. Of course, nature bears marks of great design and intelligence. But as Hume and others noted, it also bears marks of imperfection in the sense that it is uncertain how one can proceed from nature towards the knowledge of a perfect and infinitely wise Lord. Secondly, it is even impossible to know from nature itself whether this designer is eternal (if the concept means anything empirically speaking) or temporal.

Psalms 19, 148, Acts 14: 17, and Romans 1: 18-32 are testimonies of believers in God. In the Psalms the poetical language involves nature into worshipping God; it must not be interpreted as proof for divine reality. That men all over the world have a knowledge of God's goodness and justice (Acts 14: 17; 28: 4) doesn't mean that primitive man, after the evolutionary model, bereft of even a primitive notion of God, saw in nature the face of God. Why not suppose that a preacher like Noah had instilled such knowledge in his descendents? Missionary anthropological studies show that the Biblical accounts of creation, fall, and divine wrath over all the earth in the form of flood, are found in different cultures of the world with some mingled anticipation of a Savior even.[1]

Revelation as Verbal Testimony

The Bible begins with God. God is not proved but assumed. The assumption is not hypothetical but final. 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' The Bible begins with a God who acts, creates, names, and blesses. God's revelation began with speaking. The revelation of God was doubted by speaking. Truth and falsehood are the concern of revelation. Jesus himself, the revelation of God in flesh, came to bear witness to the Truth, even as the Scriptures testify of Christ.[2] Without the verbal testimony of Scriptures and the verbal testimony of Christ there is no way to see how men could have come to a faith in Christ. Of course, the testimony was attested by signs and wonders. But in its own communicative form, revelation is verbal. The words are the central part of the revelation of which supernatural events are only peripheral.

This doesn't mean that God does not communicate through the Spirit in the event of prophecy or the word of wisdom or the word of knowledge. It only means that such communication can only be 'profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness' if it is verbally communicated. The attestation of the preacher's consistent life-style,[3] of the Spirit's continuing attestation through supernatural intervention,[4] and the pragmatical outworking of the propositions[5] do not constitute revelation but only aid the crediting of divine revelation. Believing in Jesus is not separable from believing his word.[6]

Jesus Christ and the Verbal Testimony: Finality of Revelation

In the prophetic word of Jesus Christ is the finality of divine revelation. As far as encounter with God himself is concerned, without doubt in Christ dwells 'the fullness of the Godhead bodily.'[7] But that fullness of glory has not yet been manifest to mankind. To men Jesus appeared as an ordinary man.[8] Men caught a glimpse of his glory on the Mount of Transfiguration.[9] But he is yet to be revealed in the fullness of his glory.[10] Presently, the only way to see Christ is through the Scriptures[11] until his final unveiling. Thus, Christ is the finality of the *empirical, incarnate,, and salvific revelation of God, the Word made flesh.***[12]** Without doubt, similarly, the Bible (the Old and New Testament) is the finality of the *rational, inscribed, and salvific revelation of God.***[13]** In the Bible one sees with spiritual eyes the Truth of God.

The Bible is the perfect record of the prophetic word in its final form. The Old Testament is the record of God's prophetic word by the prophets to our fathers (Hebrews 1:1); the New Testament, the record of God's prophetic word by his Son Jesus Christ in its finality (Hebrews 1:2). The finality of the prophetic word of Christ was not completed at his ascension but in the complete unveiling of the mystery of His will, as related to the Church, to the apostles by the Spirit of Christ,[14] whereby it was completed, sealed, and secured.

The Nature of the Written Testimony

Spirituality. The Bible is Divinely-Humanly spiritual. It is God-breathed (2 Timothy 3: 16) and came not by the will of man 'but holy men of God spoke moved by the Holy Ghost' (2 Peter 1: 20,21). Thus, though the Bible is also human, it is not carnal. The written word is spiritual[15] because it is generated by the will of the Spirit of God. Therefore, the humanity of Bible doesn't imply its frailty. The Bible as spiritual is also perfect. In the same manner that the Son of God as the Son of man was blameless, the word of God as written by human authors is also blameless.

Further, since the Bible is spiritual its message is also spiritual. Though it is rationally understood, its deeper truths cannot be comprehended except through an understanding of spiritual categories through experience and practice characteristic of an obedient and devoted walk in the Spirit.[16] Obviously, if the spiritual categories themselves are not understood, a rational analysis would only prove futile. As Wittgenstein saw it, the meaning of a word depends on how it is used in its own context, the language game; one cannot understand it unless one enters that form of life. The Bible is the basis for true and genuine spiritual experience. Any spiritual experience that conflicts with the Spirit-inspired prophetic word of the Bible is false.[17]

Authority. The Bible is the only authoritative guide to an experiential knowledge of the living and personal God, his heart and his mind. As authoritative, the Bible is perfect and inerrant, for it is the speech of God himself. Thus, a reference to the Scripture is a reference to the final authority of divine word. The Scripture is not God, but the testimony of God. The Spirit of God is the authority behind it. Even the human author has no authority over it, far be the interpreter. When revelation is understood, man becomes responsible and is left with no excuse.[18] The Scripture as the prophetic word of God is the irrefutable proclaimer of all that man needs to know from God. The Scripture not only has a hindsight, insight, and foresight of divine will, it also declares that will to historical man.

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham....[19]

The authority of Scripture also implies that it is infallible. Unless it is infallible, it can have no complete authority. Partial infallibility means partial authority, total infallibility means total authority: the Bible is decisive in all areas of the believers life. What about the discrepancies then? The question to ask is, are the discrepancies by the Spirit or by the copyists or by the bias of the interpreter? The alternative would be to say that the revelation of God was infallible but the inscribing of the revelation along with the record of other details by humans is fallible. This assumes that God is not interested in writing his word; he is only interested in speaking his word or displaying himself to men. But, if God is anything serious with the communication of his word and if his word is crucial to man, then there is all reason that he ensures the rational finality of it in its written form – to the words themselves and not just the thoughts. It is even more amazing that God should choose to mix his revelation with the lies of men, though unintentional. Christ's testimony that 'Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled'[20] proves that the inscribed words themselves are important. Therefore, Scriptural infallibility and inerrancy cannot be compromised without damage to the character of God himself. And there is no absolute and undefeatable reason for rejecting Scriptural infallibility and inerrancy.

Testimony. The Bible is the written testimony of God. It is not an end within itself. One cannot believe the word without faith in the speaker of the word.[21] The Testifier cannot be separated from the testimony.[22] The person of God himself is behind the word. It is God's word. The experience of God in spiritual experience of prayer, spirit-empowered ministry, spirit-filled living, and spiritual battles with the kingdom of darkness are inseparably connected to the testimony of the word. Where this connection is uncertain, the experience itself is doubtful; for God's word is true. It cannot be doubted, for it is the hearing of his word that generates faith.[23]

Thus, it may be concluded that the Bible is the verbal, rational, spiritual, final, and authoritative testimony of all that God wants man to know for life, divine fellowship, and salvation. The Biblical testimony is not exhaustive information about the world. It is inscribed guide to make one wise unto salvation and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.[24] However, the word is unprofitable unless it is mixed with faith,[25] ultimately faith in God himself.[26]

[1] Cf. Don Richardson, *Eternity in their Hearts*, rev. edn. (California: Regal Books, 1984)

[2] John 18: 37, 5: 39

[3] 1 Timothy 4: 12; Matthew 7: 15-20

[4] Mark 16: 20; Hebrews 2: 3,4

[5] John 15: 7

[6] Psalm 106:24; John 2:22; 4:50; Acts 4:4; 13:48; Ephesians 1:13

[7] Colossians 2: 9

[8] Isaiah 53: 2; Mark 6: 3

[9] 2 Peter 1: 16-17

[10] 2 Thessalonians 1: 7-10; Matthew 24: 30

[11] 1 Peter 1: 8

[12] 1 John 1: 1-3; 3: 2; John 1: 14; 1 Peter 1: 23

[13] Matthew 5: 17-19; 2 Timothy 3: 16, 17

[14] John 14: 17; 16:7-13; Ephesians 3: 2-11; Revelation 1: 1-3; 22: 17-21

[15] Romans 7: 14

[16] 1 Corinthians 2: 13, 14; Hebrews 5: 14

[17] 1 John 4: 1, 2; 1 Timothy 4: 1-3

[18] John 15: 22

[19] Galatians 3: 8 (KJV)

[20] Matthew 5: 18

[21] Mark 5:36; Luke 8:12; 8:13; John 5:38; 17:20; Acts 15:7; 1Thessalonians 2:13

[22] John 15: 22, 23

[23] Romans 10: 17

[24] 2 Timothy 3: 16, 17

[25] Hebrew 4: 2

[26] Psalm 78: 22; John 20: 31

RELIABILITY OF SCRIPTURES

We usually judge things when we choose to buy or buy again. We look at reviews of products before we buy and have an opinion about products after we have used them. Suppose someone asked me the question, "How do you know that this dictionary is better than the other?" I would not reply that I don't consider any dictionary authoritative or true because it is compiled by humans; I would not question, "Why should any human tell me what is the meaning of a word?" I know the quality and the veracity of a dictionary by using it. If a dictionary is a standard and reliable one, i.e. it is authoritative, then it will help me to make sense of language every time I come across a word that I cannot make sense of. Similarly, a scripture that deals

with spiritual reality can only be authoritative and genuine when it helps me make a meaningful and right sense of the universe and my experiences in the world. Suppose, it is filled with unintelligible words or with stuff that cannot be verified, then it is a closed and mystic book, not a useful reference book or manual of living. However, if it helps us to live sensible and better lives, it is authoritative. The Bible helps us to see the world better and to live in the world better; therefore, it is true and reliable. Now, the standard of measurement that the church fathers used was called the *Canon*: It asked questions like, "Is this book authentic in its content?" (which implied that its authenticity could be verified), "Is this book authored by an apostle or one close to the apostle?", "Is this book acceptable by the local churches?" (like asking whether the meaning of the word in the dictionary was the same that is intended when the word is used in general), whether the book was recognized and quoted as Scripture by the early church fathers, and whether its subject matter was edifying spiritually. It was not a random and careless compilation. The book had to address reality. It had to be true, be verifiable as true, and function as true. And, the Bible does. It helps us understand the world better and live lives better than any other book in the world. It is a complete book.

I am convinced that we can trust the Bible: trust it as the true revelation of God. The pluralism of "revelations" calls for the exercise of the law of non-contradiction. The modern relativistic, pluralistic mood looks at the Bible as another "truth". But the fact is that there can never be an absolute infrastructure for relative truth. They always differ in their infrastructure though the superstructure might appear to be the same. The trustworthiness of the Bible is a very important issue, since it addresses issues of ultimate concern: Theology, Cosmology, and Teleology (purpose, salvation). And it supercedingly differs from other "revelatory" sources. Either the Bible is true or false; it is either trustworthy or non-trustworthy. How do we know if we can trust the Bible, then?

1. **The Philosophical Test of Internal Consistency.** In depth study shows that the Bible is never self-contradictory or self-defeating. As a matter of fact, though the books of the Bible were written over a time span of more than 1000 years by different men of differing intellectual status, economic status, and cultural background etc, yet the Bible is indubitably seen to be strewn together by one theme—redemption. It is internally consistent.
2. **The Correspondence Test.** The accounts and statements of the Bible factually correspond to the truth of history (archaeology) and science. The prophecy of Scriptures also corresponds with its fulfillment in history.
3. **The Cosmological Test.** The writers of the Biblical books were genuine, truthful men—many of them ready to give their lives for the truth (e.g. Jeremiah, John, Paul, Peter...). They could never have been deceivers. The Bible itself speaks of them as being moved by the Spirit. Concerning whether they were perpetuating falsehood, the philosophical and the correspondence test has examined the claims and accounts.
4. **The Community Test.** The Bible has never done any harm to any society which could trace the vindication of its actions to the Biblical principles themselves (the Crusaders couldn't trace their moral concepts to the principles of the Bible). The community has always benefited by the principles of the Bible. The modern clarion for equality of men and women, freedom of rights, justice, non-violence, can be best traced to the teachings of the Bible alone. The Bible has transformed whole peoples, clans, and tribes.
5. **The Pragmatic Test.** The Biblical truth works. It is still working. The Gospel truly is powerfully changing the lives of thousands daily. Voltaire said that a hundred years from his time, the Bible would be extinct. Voltaire is dead and gone, his thoughts and philosophy known by a mere few; the Bible is still the best selling, far-reaching Book of all books. All the

philosophies of all philosophers in history put together couldn't change the nature of one man. Ironically, this Book that the philosophers disdain at has turned the world upside down.

In conclusion, the Bible is the most trustworthy Book in the world. Even science books are not always trustworthy—they indulge much in theories of convenience. Can we trust the Bible? Why can't we? There are enough proof for the authenticity and reasonability of this Book on the basis of which we can place faith and trust in its revelation of God Himself and also the end and salvation of the universe.

A BASIS FOR DEPENDING ON SCRIPTURES

Though there may be a way of depending on the Scripture (i.e., the Bible) without any adherence to or trust in its content (e.g. one may depend on the Bible for knowledge concerning what the early Christians believed and how they behaved, etc), dependence on Scripture, here, means dependence on the infallibility of and the reliability of Scriptural truth—and so to live life on the basis of what the Bible says concerning life. I contend, then, that the true basis of depending on the Scripture is the real fulfillment of the ultimate existential necessity of life in experience.

It is not what can be known by experience or reason that the Bible is depended for, but more for what it says concerning the unknown – concerning the Infinite, the origin and destiny of man and the cosmos, the significance of life, etc. The Bible, then, is a revelation – and this is generally accepted as a fact. Thus, the accounts of history and other writings are not mere accounts but a revelation of God's working in history and in personal lives, His significance. But why believe the Biblical revelation rather than any other, seeing that the Hindus, the Sikhs, and the Moslems also claim their respective scriptures as being the true revelation? The answer has been given: the real fulfillment of the ultimate existential necessity of life in experience.

But doesn't this seem to indicate that the basis is a mere subjective one and would very well justify the claims of a Hindu or a Sikh? The answer is that though the fulfillment is a subjective one, as it needs to be, it is not unreal and incongruous with the body of known truth. The nature of fulfillment doesn't contradict reality. This is where reason comes into its role. Thus, though reason in itself is not the basis, it assists the basis. For since revelation deals with the unknown, there rises the possibility and the danger that anything can be said of the unknown. How then can it ever be known if the "revelation" is true or false?

Revelation is related to faith, and faith is relative (i.e., each one's faith differs from the other; the proof that Thomas Didymus needed to believe in the resurrection might not have been necessary for the other disciples). I do not, however, endorse by this blind faith, which is almost always a result of traditional upbringing and narrowed thinking. And though faith is relative, it is inconvenient for one not to be able to give reasons for his faith. Thus, one might point to the historical accuracy of the Bible, another to its prophetic fulfillments, another to its scientific verity, and some other to the accuracy of its principles as applicable in life. The above are not the basis of depending, however. It often, and most often, happens that belief precedes the above kinds of proofs. And, furthermore, the above proofs deal mostly with physical and finite facts, whereas, the Bible is depended on for mainly its revelation of ultimate truth. Reason requires that where one is fallible and erroneous on natural truth, it or he is unreliable for knowledge concerning ultimate and transcendental[1] truth. The non-biblical revelatory sources fall short of this requirement of reliability in natural truth.

Reason and faith are distinct from each other; faith is irrational—thus, it would be a circular argument trying to prove by reason why one believes in reason. As said earlier, belief comes first, at least in most cases, and reason aids or strengthens it. Thus one may never be able to depend on the Bible, truthfully speaking, unless he first “knows” it (in the same manner that one can’t depend on another person without “knowing” him). And to “know” is a subjective experience. Also seeing that this experience wouldn’t be significant enough unless the experience and the revelation have something in common, it must also be said that the experience is a very significant and an existential one.

Furthermore, the fact of depending itself proves that there is a reason and a necessity for doing so, and that, an existential necessity. This existential necessity is the ultimate one in that it seeks an answer to the ultimate “why” of existence. The Bible provides an answer to this ultimate “why” of existence. And how does it do so? Of course, in the person of Jesus Christ. Thus, one may listen to a preaching, or to a testimony, or even have a direct revelation of Jesus Christ and be converted. He is told or comes to know that the Bible is the Guide of Truth for a Christian and believes it. Questions may arise later, but they wouldn’t shake him off very easily, since he is also continuing in knowing the Lord Jesus personally (to know Christ is to know the Bible). Thus would many a Christian say along with Sadhu Sundar Singh “I believe in the Gospels because of the Christ of the Gospels”. It is not that the Bible fulfills the ultimate existential necessity of life; but that because by coming to a “knowledge” (personal) of Christ, one’s ultimate existential necessity is fulfilled. This experience of real fulfillment is the basis for depending on the Scriptures, which Christ Himself believed to be the truth (Mt.22:29; Jn.5:39), and that speak of His revelation. And as one progresses in “knowing” the Scripture and through it Christ (the Christ of History is the Christ of faith and the Christ of experience) one intensifies in his dependence on the Scriptures. Christ gives meaning and vigour to his life (The ultimate “why” is existential and isn’t an attempt to know God’s mind, which is impossible).

In conclusion, seeing that the Scripture needs to be believed on for its answer to the ultimate “why” of existence, and this truth being transcendental is unverifiable in itself, unless there is some other alternative way to verify it, it becomes necessary that reason come into role here and decide whether the Bible is reliable in its logical form and statements of natural facts. But greater and more important than this objective verification is the subjective experience of fulfillment in Jesus Christ which is the basis for depending on the Scripture that reveals Him. If He isn’t living and active *in my* life, nothing which speaks of Him is reliable existentially.

[1] Cp. Ludwig Wittgenstein: “The sense of the world must lie outside the world.... What makes it non-accidental cannot lie *within* the world, since if it did it would itself be accidental. It must lie outside the world.” (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 6.41; reproduced by John Hick in *Philosophy of Religion*, 1970).

GRAPHOLOGICAL THEOLOGY

Let us call the method of trying to decode the writing system in order to seek proofs for faith as "Graphological Theology".

Sacred Gematria

The works of Ivan Panin that discover numeric patterns in the Bible are examples of Textual Gematria. Check the following excerpt from his letter to the New York Sun:

The first 17 verses of the New Testament contain the genealogy of the Christ. It consists of two main parts: Verses 1-11 cover the period from Abraham, the father of the chosen people, to the Captivity, when they ceased as an independent people. Verses 12-17 cover the period from the Captivity to the promised Deliverer, the Christ.

Let us examine the first part of this genealogy. Its vocabulary has 49 words, or 7×7 . This number is itself seven (Feature 1) sevens (Feature 2), and the sum of its factors is 2 sevens (Feature 3). Of these 49 words 28, or 4 sevens, begin with a vowel; and 21, or 3 sevens, begin with a consonant (Feature 4).

Again: these 49 words of the vocabulary have 266 letters, or $7 \times 2 \times 19$; this number is itself 38 sevens (Feature 5), and the sum of its factors is 28, or 4 sevens (Feature 6), while the sum of its figures is 14, or 2 sevens (Feature 7). Of these 266 letters, moreover, 140, or 20 sevens, are vowels, and 126, or 18 sevens, are consonants (Feature 8).

That is to say: Just as the number of words in the vocabulary is a multiple of seven, so is the number of its letters a multiple of seven; just as the sum of the factors of the number of the words is a multiple of seven, so is the sum of the factors of the number of their letters a multiple of seven. And just as the number of words is divided between vowel words and consonant words by sevens, so is their number of letters divided between vowels and consonants by sevens.

There has certainly been criticism that Panin was creating the patterns arbitrarily and, if we look for, we can find numerical patterns anywhere (See Ivan Panin and the Gospel of Mark). However, this doesn't diminish the fact that Gematria has been used as an apologetical tool in graphological theology.

Theology of the Alphabet

Ha Dabar

Jewish mystics have maintained that God created the universe from the 22 consonants of the Hebrew Aleph-Bet, called the *otiyod yesod*, the foundational letters [Hebrew4Christians]. A theology of the alphabet would contend for the sacredness of the alphabet's origin in God. An even more intense form of this would lead to the mysticism of the alphabet. Check the following comment on Genesis 1:

After *Bere'shiyt bara 'Elohiym* there is a fourth untranslatable word. That fourth word is actually two Hebrew letters: the Aleph and the Tav. The aleph-tav (אָ) does serve a grammatical purpose in that it points to the direct object of the sentence. These two letters do not actually form a word, but rather they express an understanding. The aleph (א) is the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and the tav (ת) is the last letter of the alphabet. The placement of these two very significant letters at strategic locations within many sentences of the Hebrew Scriptures express a total completeness. It is equivalent to saying "from alpha to omega, from a to z, from first to last, from beginning to end." So, from the Hebraic point of view, they see that "In the beginning 'Elohiym created the aleph-tav. In other words, they believe that the very first thing 'Elohiym created was the Hebrew alphabet, which is known through ancient writings also as the aleph-tav. They recognize that He created the letters by which all life and all physical things spring forth from. They are divinely ordained building blocks of life. [Brad Scott, "Mysteries and Truths Hidden Within the AlephBeth"]

However, the Bible doesn't seem to support the prioritizing of any one particular language as

such. The Bible was also written in Aramaic and Greek; and Jesus, in the New Testament, actually declares Himself to be the Alpha (A) and the Omega (Ω), the beginning and the end (Rev.1:8,11;21:6; 22:13). Alpha is the first and Omega the last letter of the Greek Alphabet.

Genesis in the Chinese Characters

But, this may not be limited to just Hebrew or Arabic. Studies in the Chinese characters have been used as proofs for the reliability of the Bible by Chinese scholars. Check the following two excerpts from C.H. Kang's *The Discovery of Genesis* (1979):



cover



tree



tempter

But to be more specific, the *devil* 鬼 radical is then placed under the *cover* 广 of protecting *trees* 林. The *devil* 鬼 waited for Eve in the forbidden tree, which was located in the middle of the garden next to the tree of life-hence the two trees 林. Furthermore, he was under *cover* 广, being hidden in the tree and also camouflaged as a serpent. By uniting these primitive pictographs into an ideographic character, the word tempter 魔 appears to have been designed. Or were these six significant constituent symbols brought together by mere chance ?

厶 + 儿 + 田 + 丿 = 鬼 + 林 + 广 = 魔
secret man garden [alive] devil trees cover tempter

The preceding serves' to illustrate the purpose of this book in exploring some of the pictographic and

As one contemplates the entire character for the *Spirit* 靈,³ one might well marvel at its composition. This word alone profoundly reveals the history of the Spirit of God : His “moving upon the face of the deep” at the time of creation, and His work through the different ages as the representative of the God-head to this earth. This would seem to indicate that the Chinese had a true concept of the Trinity.

一 + 冂 + 水 = 雨 + 三口 + 巫 = 靈
heaven cover water rain three person worker of magic Spirit

According to the Biblical record the entire creative



Spirit

Again, the validity of such interpretations has been debated. One counter-argument has been that such interpretations are very literalist and do not do justice to the intent of the character composition. It has been argued that though the characters were ultimately derived from pictograms, when they became used for writing, they ceased to be pictographic, and that most of the Chinese characters have both phonetic (establishing sound) and signific (hinting at a semantic category). For instance, "the character 媽, used to mean 'mother', is composed of the elements 女 'woman' and 馬 'horse'. While the component meaning 'woman' hints that the character has something to do with women, the component meaning 'horse' in fact establishes pronunciation - both the 'mother' and 'horse' morphemes are pronounced /ma/, albeit with different tones." [Wiki:Chinese Characters and the Bible]. But, the fact that the contextual apologists were looking at the ultimate derivative beyond the surface usage, is certainly not discounted.

Philosophy of the Word

The All-Encompassing Syllable

Verse 1-2 of the Taittiriya Upanisad's fourth chapter describes the Sacred Syllable *Om* as "preeminent in the Vedas, that pervades all words, and that emerged from the immortal Vedas as their quintessence..." [Trans. Swami Gambhirananda, Advaita Ashrama]. The Mandukya Upanisad exposes *Om* as the the Beginning, Middle, and End of all sound; it encompasses all the sounds beginning with the opening of the mouth with the sound (Aa), then closing to middle with U, and closing down with Ma. OM=Aa+U+Ma. The Upanisads encourage the recital of *Om* before every incantation of prayer (Taittiriya 1.8.1). Check the poetic motif of *Om* in this beautiful prayer of the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad 1.3.28:

orṁ asato mā sad gamaya (*Om* Lead me from Truthlessness to Truth)

tamaso mā jyotir gamaya (Lead me from Darkness to Light)

mṛtyor mā amṛtaṁ gamaya (Lead me from Death to Immortality)

orṁ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ (*Om* Peace, Peace, Peace!)

The Hindus have long looked at *Om* as the Beginning and the End of all reality. It has become the religious symbol of Hinduism. Practical Hindu mysticism values incantation and utterance of *Om* as encompassing all things including all quarters of space and time.

Interestingly, the Indian concept of *Om* seems to be a bit parallel to that of the Greek ΑΩ (See above). However, the philosophical frameworks of meaning in which the terms are used compel difference. Still, the concept of Beginning-Middle-End looks inviting to compare it with the phrase, "who is and who was and who is to come". Also, the idea of the All-Encompassing cannot ignore the Person in whom all things, both in heaven and on earth, will be gathered together (Eph.1:10). Yet, again the Biblical view is Trinitarian and non-pantheistic, and the human soul is a creature of God.

He gives to all life, breath, and all things. (Act 17:25)

in Him we live and move and have our being, (Act 17:28)

The All-Governing Word

Heraclitus taught that the universe was governed by the *Logos*, which means "word" but may also be interpreted as "law" or "reason". According to Heraclitus,

- The *Logos* was fire-like.
- The *Logos* was a divine force.

- The *Logos* produces the order and pattern discernible in the flux of nature.
- This divine force is similar to human reason. [*Logos*, Microsoft Encyclopedia Encarta]

Church Father Justin Martyr (c.100-c.165), elaborately made use of the *Logos* theology as an apologetic approach to Greek philosophy and religion. In Christian Theology, *Logos* is the Person of Christ. This helped Justin to accept philosophers such as Plato as speaking according according to the Word. According to Justin,

Even before the coming of Christ, the *logos* was manifested partially in such Greek philosophers as Socrates and Heraclitus, and in such Hebrews as Abraham, Ananias, Azarias, Misael, and Elijah (1st Apology). Plato's truth was dependent on Moses (chs.59-60).

The seed of God's *logos* (*logos spermatikos*) was disseminated to all men in their God-given capacity to respond to truth. "Whatever things were rightly said among all men are the property of us Christians" (2Apol. 13:4)

There were Christians before Christ, such as Socrates and Heraclitus (1Apol. 46:3)

All Theophanies in OT were Christophanies "For the ineffable Father and Lord of all neither comes to any place... but remains in His own place..." [Dial.127:2, See Justin Martyr]

Similar line of thinking exists in Sikh theology, in which the *Sabad*, i.e. the Word, is considered to be the Guru (i.e. the Teacher).

Conclusion

Is Graphological Theology biblically justifiable? With regard to Theology of the Text, the Bible does speak about every scripture being inspired and that every jot and tittle having significance in the Bible (2Tim.3:15; Matt.5:18). However, there are dangers in over emphasizing gematriac patterns and disregarding the message of the Spirit for the composition of the word. God gives us the tree in order to eat of its fruit; not to count its leaves and spend time analysing its patterns. However, this doesn't mean that the patterns do not exist; for everything that is God-created is God-sealed.

The same also holds for studies in Chinese characters. It is certainly not very surprising to find bridges and connections to the Bible in local folk stories, rituals, and even graphology. Don Richardson has recorded amazing missionary findings in various cultures all over the world in his very important book *Eternity in their Hearts*. However, one must be careful to not assume a bridge where a bridge doesn't exist, or else he may have to walk over thin air. The Chinese findings cannot be discounted as accidental; nor does an argument of phonetics rule away the question of finding the sources of the original characters. God is not just the God of the Hebrews or of the Mayans; He has been historically present among us all from the beginning. And, His trails are visible among us. We only need to find them.

But, what about the inclusion of the extra-biblical themes in the study of Scriptures. Again, one must be careful not to misapply anything to where it doesn't belong. We must remember that the Bible only tells us this about the Scriptures:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2Ti 3:16-17 NKJ)

THEOLOGY (PROPER)

The Bible teaches us that God is the creator of the universe (Gen. 1:1). As creator, He is unlike creation - in other words, He is uncreated, He is eternal, without beginning and without end. He is the eternal God (Ex. 15:18; Deut. 33:27). The Bible also teaches us that God is Spirit (Jn. 4:24). No one has ever seen or ever can see God as Spirit for He is invisible (Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:17). God is everywhere (Ps. 139:7-10), is unlimited in power (Matt. 19:26), and is all-wise and all-discerning (Lk. 12:2).

God is One, which, firstly means that He is indivisible and, secondly, that there is no other being who can be called God other than Him. There is only one God (Deut. 4:35). God is the giver of life (Job 33:4). He is the Ruler and Judge of the world that belongs to Him (Ps. 10:16). He will bring all thoughts, words, and deeds of men to judgement in the last day, also called the Day of Judgement (2 Pet. 3:7).

The Bible commands all people everywhere to submit to God in reverential fear, repentance from sin, and obedient faith (Eccl. 12:13; Acts 17:30).

The Bible tells us that God is our Father (Matt. 6:9; Acts 17:29), that He loves us with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3) and so doesn't want us to perish in our sins (the evil thoughts and actions of which each one of us is guilty). Therefore, God prepared a way of salvation for us by Himself taking our place of punishment and suffering for us, when He was incarnated as man and paid our penalty through His eternal sacrifice on the cross. Therefore, also, God is our only Savior (Jude 1:25). Anyone who prays in His heart to this true God is immediately heard by Him because God is everywhere and closer than our very breath (Ps. 34:17; 130:1). Anyone who says "I'm sorry for my sin, please forgive me Lord" is forgiven by God and his sins are removed as far as the east is from the west (in other words, totally erased, Ps. 103:12). This forgiveness and a new start of life are provided to us because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Who is the very Image and Word of God that incarnated as human 2000 years ago) by which He put an end to the old world of sin and death and, by rising up from the death on the third day, brought to us newness of life.

I AM THAT I AM

This is the Name by which God introduced Himself to Moses. The exact passage is:

And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I Am That I Am: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto you. (**Ex.3:13,14**)

This is the Name by which only God can introduce Himself.

If somebody asked me who I am, I might answer by telling that I am the son of so and so, or that my profession is such and such, or that I work at such and such, etc. My identity is dependent on a host of other things. The technical term is "contingency". My identity is contingent upon a number of other factors.

However, **God's identity is not dependent on anything else.** He is who He is! As Ravi Zacharias said, "God is the only being in existence, the reason for whose existence lies within himself." God's identity is absolute, independent, and final - He is the Beginning and End of all things. In the ultimate sense, in fact, it is from Him that all things derive their particular identity.

"For in him we live and move and have our being." (**Acts 17:28**)

He is self-sufficient, self-contained, and self-satisfied eternally - in need of nothing. He is the great I AM!

DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY

Divine sovereignty does not preclude human freewill. For God to be sovereign doesn't mean that He has to charter the course of every action on earth according to His will -- to stay, allow, or carry out everything on His own. In that case, "sovereignty" itself would be emptied of meaning, since it can only apply to that which can be ruled, particularly in a political sense. For instance, we call India a "Sovereign Republic"; it doesn't mean that all Indians are devoid of freewill. But, all Indians certainly are called to submit to the Law of the State. That is sovereignty. If the world were what it is in history because of divine predetermination, then freedom of will wouldn't exist; meaning, that the world would be like a big machine that an operator is operating; the machine has no will of its own and so can submit to none by its own free choice; it is amoral. But the human world is not so; it is governed on ethical and socio-political laws that call on virtues such as wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice.

Divine sovereignty means that God is the Lord of the universe and defiance of His authority is the greatest punishable offence.

GOD'S WILL

God's will is His desire, intent, and purpose.

Five Aspects of God's Will

- 1. God's Personal Will** - The will of God that He accomplishes and which is unaffected by what any volitional beings do (Ps.115:3; Heb.6:17,18).
- 2. God's Prescriptive Will** - The will that God prescribes for us to follow (1Jn.2:17; 1Thess.4:3). This includes both God's mandatory and prohibitory will (things that He commands us to do and things that He prohibits us to do).
- 3. God's Preferred Will** - The will of God that prefers something over another (1Tim.2:1; Rom.12:2)
- 4. God's Permissive Will** - The will of God that permits certain things, though they are not preferred by Him (Acts 14:16).
- 5. God's Pliable Will** - The will of God that can be changed through human responses (Gen.18:23ff; Exo.32:11-13,14; Jonah 3:10)

How we can abide in God's will

1. Seeking God (Prov.28:5)
2. Seeking Discernment (Prov.2:3,4,5; Col.1:9; James 1:5)
3. Repenting from sin (2Cor.3:16; 1Jn.1:6-8)
4. Obeying God's Word - His Written Will (1Jn.2:17)
5. Renewing the mind (Rom.12:2)

6. Being Spiritually minded (1Cor.2:14)
7. Praying in the Spirit (Rom.8:27)

IS GOD THE AUTHOR OF SIN?

The answer, obviously, is “No!” God is not the author of sin. However, it is not an answer as easily agreed upon as stated

Answering the Calvinist

The extreme Calvinists that are committed to the once-saved-forever-saved doctrine of eternal security, for instance, maintain that it was God Himself who ordained the sin and fall of Adam. In his *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (1932), Loraine Boettner wrote: “Even the fall of Adam, and through him the fall of the race, was not by chance or accident, but was so ordained in the secret counsels of God.” And again, “we hold that God fore-planned and fore-saw the fall; that it in no sense came as a surprise to Him.” Likewise, Edwin H. Palmer, in his *The Five Points of Calvinism*, argued: “Even sin - the fall of the devil from heaven, the fall of Adam, and every evil thought, word, and deed in all of history, including the worst sin of all, Judas’ betrayal of Christ - is included in the eternal decree of our holy God.” This conclusion became necessary for these theologians who considered any event that violates the will of God to be a threat to the sovereignty of God. God was sovereign, so according to them, anything that happens in this world could not be against God. Also, it was insisted that if God had not ordained the fall of Adam, redemption through Christ would have not been possible. Thus, Boettner asks, “And unless the fall was in the plan of God, what becomes of our redemption through Christ? Was that only a makeshift arrangement which God resorted to in order to offset the rebellion of man?” Therefore, the reality of sin had to be explained by interpreting it as an act of God. In other words, according to Calvinism, ultimately, God is the author of sin.

Of course, Boettner doesn’t think that his view of God foreordaining Adam’s fall implies that God is the author of sin. Thus, he contends:

Yet God in no way compelled man to fall. He simply withheld that undeserved constraining grace with which Adam would infallibly not have fallen, which grace He was under no obligation to bestow. In respect to himself, Adam might have stood had he so chosen; but in respect to God it was certain that he would fall. He acted as freely as if there had been no decree, and yet as infallibly as if there had been no liberty.... God was pleased to permit our first parents to be tempted and to fall, and then to overrule their sin for His own glory. Yet this permission and overruling of sin does not make Him the author of it.

But, Boettner fails to see that this necessitating of the fall and the method of withdrawing grace only directly condemns God. It is equal to the sin of David who arranged to put Uriah in an inevitably fatal position and commanded his men to withdraw in the heat of the battle, in order to let Uriah get killed. That directly incriminated David and made him guilty of murder. The Genesis 3 episode, however, doesn’t indicate in any way that God had actually withdrawn constraining grace from Adam in order to make it inevitable for him to fall into sin. God cannot be held responsible for sin in the world. He is not the author of sin.

The rational man cannot accept God to be the author of sin. How could God, who is the embodiment of good, be the author of evil? Over 2,500 years ago, the Greek philosopher Plato, in his *The Republic*, concluded that “the good is to be attributed to God alone; of the evils the causes are to be sought elsewhere, and not in Him.” But, the Calvinist would object that to search for the cause of evils elsewhere is to expect that there was or were forces, other than God, in control of the universe; but, this is impossible, for God is sovereign, they would say.

However, the fact that God is sovereign has nothing to do with the fact that sin is possible in a system of free creatures. The sovereignty of a nation doesn't mean that free citizens of it will not violate its laws; however, its sovereignty does give it its authority to administer justice in the system by means of reward and punishment. Similarly, God's sovereignty doesn't mean that free creatures have been restricted from exercising their will in opposition to the will of God. The very exercise of this free will is what creates the possibility of a moral universe.

Answering the Non-theist

Among philosophers, it is usually held that the idea of God's existence as a perfect being is not compatible with the fact of sin and evil in the world. The Scottish philosopher David Hume argued that it is better to theorize that this world was created by different, finite beings (let's say, the gods of polytheism) than to believe in an imperfect world full of sin and violence having been created by a perfect God. However, such a view doesn't answer the question of how these finite beings came into existence; for, anything finite is limited by space and time. But, if there is an infinite being, that infinite being can only be one, not many (in the same way that if there were an infinite ocean, there couldn't be other infinite oceans). Dualists, on the other hand, think that evil is as essential to the world as is good; the world is composed of two eternally opposite forces. But, again, two eternally opposite forces that are infinite in themselves would not complement but cancel each other. For instance, infinite light, materially speaking, leaves no room for darkness.

But, then, one would ask, "If God is good, how come there is evil?" The answer is because God is not the universe (as in pantheism), but the Creator of it. If God were the universe, then the universe would be perfectly good and there wouldn't be any room for evil, for there wouldn't be "wills" of other beings involved. However, that is not the case. But, at the same time, it is important to state that the finitude of the universe is not what necessitates evil; for, if that was the case then God who created the finite world would also be the creator of evil, which is not so.

However, the very idea of contingency (that the finite world is dependent upon the infinite God) implies that a creation that is cut off from the Creator has lost its wholeness (well-being). Therefore, a sin-stricken and evil-stricken world only indicates a God-separated world that has gone chaotic and wild without its Driver; in which every part of the mechanism has become its own god and director, and the universe as a whole (especially, in relation to the moral universe) has both lost harmony and order. To state that God must not have permitted this to happen (since He is the perfect Driver) is to forget the fact that the problem of sin concerns a moral (not a mechanical) universe; as such, it would not have been consistent for God Himself to have created a moral universe and not have given freedom to its moral entities—the freedom to choose between good and evil.

As such, it is not God who is the author of sin, but man himself to whom the world was meant to be subject (Gen.1:28) that is responsible for the entry of sin, chaos, and disorder in the universe.

...sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned- (Rom 5:12 NIV)

...the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. (Rom 8:20-21 NIV)

In addition, one must understand evil, not as a positive reality, but as the negation and violation of truth. One only knows evil because one sees it as the defective aspect of the good; for instance, one only knows darkness because it is seen as the absence of light. Therefore, it is important to reaffirm that it is not God who created sin, but that when man violated the command of God and negated God, this act of negation constituted sin; thus, making man guilty of sin entering the world.

Conclusion

Usually, it is misunderstandings regarding the sovereignty and the perfectness of God that raise doubts whether God is the author of sin or not. However, we have examined the main views to see if really these doubts or conclusions are true, and if their logic is valid. The sovereignty of God doesn't imply that the universe cannot have rebellious elements; however, it does assert that these elements cannot efface the righteousness of God. Secondly, the contingency of the created world and its givenness to humans for morally right dominion implies that the world falls with the fall of man into sin. Man is not a programmed robot (for if that was so then both sin and self-reflection, as in this essay, would have been impossible). Man is a moral creature; therefore, the primary cause of sin in this world, as also stated in Romans 5:12 is disobedient man himself.

THE GLORY OF THE LORD

The Hebrew word for "Glory" used in the Old Testament is *kabod* and it signifies "glory, honour, glorious, abundance, riches honour, splendour, glory, dignity, reputation, reverence". The New Testament Greek word is *doxa* and signifies "splendour, brightness, magnificence, excellence, preeminence, dignity, grace, majesty".

The Bible talks about the glory of the sun, the moon, and the stars.

"There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory." (1Co 15:40-41 NKJ)

It mentions a woman's hair as being her glory (1Cor.11:15) and says that the "glory of young men is their strength, and the splendor of old men is their gray head." (Pro 20:29 NKJ)

However, all glory of creation is momentary and fleeting. But, God's glory is eternal, immutable, and absolute.

God's glory is revealed in His:

1. General Revelation (Psalm 19:1; Rom.1:20ff). His creation declares His glory.
2. Special Revelation. God's Propositional Word (The Inscribed Word) reveals His Glory. God's Personal Word (The Incarnated Word, Jesus Christ) is the final revelation of God's Glory.

In the Bible, we find at least two aspects of the Glory of God:

1. The Essential and Intrinsic Glory of God. This is God's Glory as He is in Himself. Generally, we know it as part of the Mystery of God and the Glory that is hidden; but, revealed in the last days in the person of God's Son Jesus Christ who is the brightness of God's glory (Heb.1:3).

2. The Manifested Glory of God. This is recurrently found in the Bible in the form of the various Theophanies in which God's glory appears as cloud, pillar of fire, and smoke.

With regard to Christ's glory Himself, we know of at least:

1. Christ's glory with the Father during His preexistence, before the Incarnation (John 17:5)
2. Christ's glory revealed in the Incarnation as the glory of God's only begotten Son (John 1:14).
3. Glories that were to follow after His passion (1Peter 1:11)
4. Christ's ascension into glory (1Tim.3:16)
5. God's glory in the Church through Christ Jesus (Eph.3:21)
6. Christ return in the glory of the Father (Matt. 16:27).
7. Christ's glory in the New Jerusalem (Rev.21:23).

We also know the Mission of Christ to be at least two-fold:

1. To glorify the Father by completing the work He gave Him to do (John 17:4)
2. To bring many sons to glory (Heb.2:10; Rom.8:18-21)

The Old and the New

We also see that the glory of God revealed in Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of God within us surpasses the glory revealed in the Old Covenant (2Cor.3). This doesn't mean that the glory underwent progression; but, we only saw the true glory in the face of Jesus Christ now shining in our hearts through the Spirit of God (2Cor.3:18; 4:6). Thus, it is important for one to turn to the Lord so that the veil will be removed. It is also important to seek the Lord so that our eyes be opened to know the hope of our calling and the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. (Eph 1:18,19) The Old was only a shadow that pointed to the New.

1. In the OT, the glory of God had to be seen; in the NT, it has been seen, revealed already in Jesus Christ.
2. In the OT, the glory was external; in the NT, it is internal - Christ in us, the hope of glory.
3. In the OT, the glory was geographical, it filled the temple, a place; in the NT, the glory is spiritual - we worship Him in Spirit and in Truth and the glory is manifest inside of us.
4. In the OT, the glory was distant - they saw it afar off and feared to draw near; in the NT, it is closer than our breath.
5. In the OT, it was out there; in the NT, it is in here.
6. In the OT, the glory of God was a stranger - it evoked fear; in the NT, the glory of God is our friend - grounded in love.

The **Manifestational Glory** of God is often seen as manifested in **Volume** (filling the temple, and likewise) and/or **Motion** (moving in/out, standing), and **Power** (Rev.15:8; 2Thess 1;7).

We can find at least 12 distinctives of the Glory of God in the Church of the New Testament (2Corinthians 3,4):

1. Surpassing Glory (3:10)
2. Unfading Glory(3:11)
3. Open, Uncovered, Unveiled Glory (3:18; 4:3)
4. Transforming Glory (3:18)
5. Enlightening Glory (4:6)
6. Humble Glory (4:7) - dwelling in earthen vessels
7. Precious Glory (4:7) - treasure
8. Invisible Glory (4:8-12) - cannot be crushed.
9. Adorable (4:15)
10. Magnificent - far outweighing (4:17)

- 11. Eternal (4:17)
- 12. Invisible (4:18)

Now, this glory is in relation to the Christian; which means that it also involves the subjective response of the Christian towards the Absolute Glory of God.

We find three aspects of God's Glory operating in the life of the believer:

- 1. Glory that cannot be worked for - it is a gift (John 17:22)
- 2. Glory that works upon us, to transform us (2Cor.3:18)
- 3. Glory that is worked out of us (2Cor.4:17). When we are crushed (in suffering), His glory is squeezed out.

We can classify it into the three aspects of the Salvation table:

- 1. Positional Glory (Gift)
- 2. Progressive Glory (Changed from Glory to Glory)
- 3. Perfect Glory (Glorification of the Saints and Manifestation of the Sons of God)

TRINITY

The doctrine of Trinity states that God is Triune; He is One God in three Persons. The three persons of the Divine Trinity are co-equal, co-substantial, and co-eternal with each other. The importance of the doctrine can be seen in its uniqueness to provide humans with the following four grounds:

1. Ground of Morality

Provides the rational-eternal basis for moral categories - If God was a not a Trinity, then categories such as love, joy, and goodness couldn't be absolute.

2. Ground of Relationality

Provides the relational basis for interpersonal relationships. Therefore, Christ could pray regarding His disciples, "that they may be one, as We are" (Joh. 17:11).

3. Ground of Knowability

Provides the rational-empirical basis for epistemic categories - if God was not a Trinity, then the knowledge as a subject-object relationship, as analytic-synthetic distinction, and Truth as such couldn't find an original ground.

4. Ground of Plurality

Provides the metaphysical ground for a pluralist reality, and unity in diversity of the uni-verse.

Rational Anticipation of the Doctrine of Trinity

The third criterion of Revelation in Indian philosophy is Rational Anticipation (Hiriyanna: Indian Philosophy); the first two being the principle of not-this-worldly (alaukika) and the principle of non-contradiction (abadhita; i.e. revelation must not contradict known facts).

The question is whether the doctrine of Trinity meets the principle of Rational Anticipation?

We'll quickly look at two arguments to check out the same.

1. The Argument from the Possibility of Knowledge

- a. If God exists, He must be an intelligent being (or else, intelligence is an accident and truth is impossible- but, to say truth is impossible is to contradict self; therefore, truth exists and has its eternal ground in God).
- b. Intelligence involves Knowledge and Knowledge involves a Subject-Object distinction.
- c. Eternal intelligence must involve eternally a Subject-Object distinction.
- d. This distinction must be internal and eternal (since, nothing can be infinite and eternal outside the Godhead - God is by nature infinite, and there cannot be more than one infinite).
- e. Complete distinction requires at least three persons (I, You, He/She/They).
- f. Therefore, possibility of knowledge rationally anticipates the Three Persons in a Subject-Object relationship.

2. The Argument from Morality

- a. If God exists, He must be a moral being (or else, morality is a temporal category and ultimately and eternally meaningless).
- b. Morality involves community (Without community, morality is meaningless; for where there is only one person there is no moral obligation to anyone because there is no other person).
- c. A community involves persons who are morally responsible to each other.
- d. Responsibility involves a witness (which in turn requires the community to be composed of at least three persons, necessarily speaking: beyond that is not-necessary).
- e. Therefore, the existence of morality rationally anticipates the Three Persons in an eternal Community relationship.

CHRISTOLOGY

Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Jn.3:16) in whom and through whom God is revealed to us (Heb.1:1,2). He is the Word of God (Jn.1:1), the image of the invisible God (Col.1:15). He was not created or given birth to; He is not a "son" in that sense; He is eternal. He is God (Jn.1:1). He is the only Mediator between God and man (1 Tim.2:5) and between man and man (Eph.2:14). Whatever is finally known to us about God is known through and in Jesus Christ, because the fullness of Godhead dwells in Him bodily (Col.2:9). He is the express image of God's person, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe (Col.1:16; Heb.1:3). He is not an other God but is God and one with God (Jn.17:22) who is a Trinity. God is Father, God is Son, God is Holy Spirit. But God is not three. He is one. The three are one. How can that be? It is so because God is Truth, God is Joy, and God is Love. As Truth, God is a unity of the Knower, the Known, and the Omniscient Spirit. As Love, He is the Lover, the Beloved, and the Spirit of Love. As Joy, He is the Rejoicer, the Object of Pleasure, and the Spirit of Joy. Jesus existed before Abraham existed (Jn.8:58). Jesus existed before the creation of this universe (Jn.1:1,2). Jesus is eternal.

All things were made through Jesus and for Jesus (Col.1:16). He is the Heir of God, the Firstborn of all creation (Col.1:15). He is the Redeemer of creation, the Savior of the world, for which purpose He became man (Jn.1:14) to suffer the penalty of our sins and fulfill the righteousness of God (Heb.2:9-18). He rose from the dead and became the author of a new creation so that all who receive Him by obedience of faith are made co-heirs of the Kingdom of God. He will return again in the Last Day to judge the living and the dead (2 Tim.4:1).

THE SON

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, God was known as the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. He was the God of the Fathers. The possessive phrase "of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob" reminded of at least three aspects of the YHWH-Israel relationship:

1. The Covenant-Basis of the Relationship. God made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and with their descendants; so, Israel stood in a covenant relationship with God. (2Kgs.13:23)

2. The Continuity of the Relationship. Jesus declared that the phrase "of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob" implied that God was the God of the living and not of the dead. The phrase didn't become obsolete when the three patriarchs physically died. The phrase was valid because they were alive in the spirit, and God was the God of living; which also meant that the relationship was a living and continuing one (Matt.22:32; Mark 12:25,26; Matt.8:11). God's relationship with Israel as a nation didn't die when the patriarchs died physically. It continues on.

3. The Completeness of the Relationship. God made sure to ratify His covenant with each of the fathers. It was irrevocable and complete. The line of blessing was specifically chosen. Of course, Ishmael had to go; and so, Esau. But, the identity of the children of Israel as a chosen covenant people was established completely in the line of Abraham-Isaac-Jacob.

This further revealed their

Rootedness as a nation in God, by God, of God, and for God.

Responsibility as a nation in God, by God, of God, and for God.

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, however, with regard to the Church, the phrase "of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob" is not used. Of course, Jesus did speak of people coming from various parts to sit at table with the three patriarchs when the Kingdom comes (Matt.8:11); and Peter

used it with respect to the Jews (Acts 3:13); however, the possessive phrase used for the disciples of Christ is different. God is called as:

God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil.1:2; Col.1:2; 1Thess.1:1)

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (2Cor.1:3; 11:31; Eph.1:3; Col.1:3; 1Pet.1:3)

God of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph.1:17)

From God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love (2Jn.1:3)

For sure, this relationship is a stronger Covenant Relationship (Heb.12:24), an eternally Continuing Relationship (Heb.7:16,17), and an absolutely Complete Relationship (Heb.6:18; Col.2:10). But, the phrases, noticeably have also at least two different versions. The first is:

"God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2Cor.1:3; 11:31; Eph.1:3; Col.1:3; 1Pet.1:3)

It reminds us of four things:

1. The Finality of Revelation in Christ. In the old, God spoke through the fathers; but, in the last days through His Son. (Heb.1:1,2)

2. The Fatherhood of God in Christ. God is not just the God of our fathers, but He is God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is called as the Son. (Of course, He is called the "Everlasting Father" in Isaiah 9:6; however, in the Triune relationship with us, He is the Firstborn). Zac Poonen has pointed out that Christ was always called as the only begotten Son before His resurrection; but, after His resurrection, He is known as the Firstborn among many brethren (Rom.8:29). We don't look back to our fathers as a second or third generation; but, we look back directly to God who Himself is our Father through our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. The Fullness of the Authority of Christ. Unlike Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Jesus died and rose and again and is exalted to the right hand of God and is given a Name above all names. He is our Lord. His authority in the Church and in His Kingdom is complete and final. While the Jews looked back at the patriarchs as their fathers, we look up to Jesus as our Lord.

4. The Favor of God on all humanity through Christ. It points us to our Root; the one who is called the Source and Root of Jesse (Israel) is now also the hope of all mankind (both Jews and Gentiles alike). (Isaiah 11:10; Rom.15:12). The identity of the Christian doesn't come from any race, religion, culture, or language; but, it comes from Christ alone. While the Jews could proudly talk of the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, the believers could only joyfully talk of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The other version of the phrase is:

God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (*Phil.1:2; Col.1:2; 1Thess.1:1*).

This is usually used in statements where there is a talk of proceeding from (grace and mercy from) or identity in (1Thess.1:1). The phrase also implies at least three facts:

1. The **Co-Equality** of the Son with the Father. The conjunction "and" places the two persons of the Divine Godhead together.

2. The **Co-Substantiality** of the Son with the Father. The identity of the Church in God and the Son as well as the procession of grace and mercy from God and the Son point to the unity that is within the Godhead. There are not two sources but one (Rev.22:1).

3. The **Co-Eternality** of the Son with the Father. The above two logically imply the understanding of the Son as co-eternal with the Father.

Therefore, Paul calls it the mystery of godliness:

Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory. (1Ti 3:16 NKJ)

THE LAST ADAM

This is the title used for Jesus in 1Cor.15:45-47. As the Last Adam, Jesus is contrasted with the First Adam. A few contrasts are as follows:

1. The First Adam was not born of any sexual union; the Last Adam was not born of any sexual union.
2. The First Adam is called son of God (Luke 3:38); the Last Adam is the Son of God.
3. The First Adam brought sin into the world; the Last Adam put an end to sin.
4. The First Adam was made a living soul; the Last Adam was a life-giving Spirit.
5. The First Adam was the head of the sinful race; the Last Adam was the one in whom sin came to an end.

The related title of Jesus is Second Man. As the Last Adam, He is the end of the old sinful race; as the Second Man, He is the head of the new holy race, the Church of the Firstborn.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH

1. **Sinlessness of Christ.** The sinful nature was absent from His human nature.
2. **Divinity.** The Virgin Birth made Incarnation possible or else He'd have been a mere human.
3. **Uniqueness.** Not as Hercules, having 2 fathers, one divine, one human.
4. **Miraculous.** The supernaturalness of the event. Not natural.
5. **One Person.** 2 Natures but one person. If born of a human father and mother then a new person (dual personality is contradictory)
6. **Divine Act.** Prophesied beforehand by Isaiah.

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him.

And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?"

But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."

Then he allowed Him. (Mat 3:13-15 NKJ)

The Baptism of Jesus Was

1. **NOT Anointing of Jesus** for the Office of Priest, Prophet, or King. Christ is the Anointed One, and His Anointing is eternal. He is the Anointer.
2. **NOT identification with sinful humanity as if Jesus were being baptized in the same manner as others--not, at all.** Jesus identified with humanity by partaking of human nature in His Incarnation. John didn't baptize Him with the baptism of repentance like he baptized others. In fact, John recognized Jesus as the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world (Jn.1:29); in other words, it was not the waters of baptism but the Lamb who saves us from our sins.

It Was

To fulfill all righteousness (Matt.3:15). Not for the remission of sins but for the fulfillment of all righteousness; in other words, in order to finish the work of the Kingdom of God, for the Kingdom and righteousness are inseparable. John confessed that he needed to be baptized by Jesus (for the remission of sins); but, Jesus indicated that His baptism was in order to fulfill all

righteousness. The work of righteousness is the dispensational work of God in human history. It is the work of the Kingdom and is also known as the Mystery of Godliness (1Tim.3:16). Its opposite is the unrighteousness, darkness, and disobedience (the Mystery of Iniquity) that characterizes the kingdom of the Satan whose anti-christ is known as the man of sin or the lawless one--unrighteous deception marks the reign of the devil (2Thess.2:7-12).

1. PROPHETIC IDENTIFICATION & TESTIMONY. The Baptism by John Sealed Old Testament Prophecy of Jesus. In fact, all the Law and Prophets bore testimony to Jesus (Heb.1:1,2;1Pet.1:11) and the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Rev.19:10). The Law and the Prophets prophesied until John (Matt.11:13). In other words, John was the last of the Old Testament line of prophets. He was the last of the OT Prophets to bear testimony of Jesus. John was distinct in that he personally bore witness of Jesus by identifying Him as the Messiah. By being baptized by John, Jesus not only recognized the baptism of John as authoritative but also sealed up Old Testament prophecy as fulfilled in Him (Matt.5:17). As the Forerunner of Jesus, John's prophetic testimony was crucial.

2. DISPENSATIONAL DIVISION. The Baptism of Jesus by John also marked the fading of the Old and the beginning of the New. Thus, later John will say, "He must increase, but I must decrease. (Jn.3:30). The advent of Christ was the advent of the Kingdom and Jesus remarked later that "among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." (Mat 11:11-12). John rejoices as the friend of the Bridegroom and (though spiritually member of Christ's Church, yet dispensationally-i.e. in relation to historical timeline) distinguishes himself from the Bride, i.e. the Church. The Baptism did two things:

a. It revealed Christ to Israel. In fact, John came baptizing in order for Jesus to be revealed to Israel (John 1:31).

b. It divinely confirmed Christ's messiahship through the sign of the descent of the Spirit on Him and the voice from heaven that announced, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt.3:17).

It seems there were two stages of confirmation for John the Baptist about the identity of Jesus:

1. He knew that Jesus was Christ when Christ came to him and so said that it was he who needed to be baptized. Then, upon baptism when the Spirit descended on Christ, it was the fulfillment of a sign given to him. "And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."(Jn. 1:32-34NKJ)

2. When John was in prison, he sent his disciples to seek confirmation and Jesus told them (obviously hinting to Isaiah 61:1,2) "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. (Mat 11:4-5). This second episode possibly seeks to confirm to John's disciples while he was in prison that John was himself also awaiting the coming of Christ and His coming meant that the mission of John was over. It marked the end of the Old and the beginning of the New.

IMPECCABILITY OF CHRIST

The doctrine of the **Impeccability of Christ** states that Christ could not sin, i.e. He was incapable of sinning. For one thing, it is certain that Christ's temptations were real (Heb. 4:15), that Christ experienced struggle (Mt. 26:36-46), and that Christ did not sin (2Co. 5:21; Heb. 7:26; Jas. 5:6; 1Pe. 2:22; 1Pe. 3:18). Those who hold on to the "Peccability view" believe that Christ could have sinned but He chose not to sin. But, such a view tries to segregate the divine and the human in Christ, as if Christ was devoid of His divine nature when "in the days of His flesh"; however, the fact is that Christ in the days of His flesh was the Word Incarnate: fully God and fully Man, and His humanity could not annul His eternal moral perfection by any means.

Conclusion – Impeccability : Temptation implies possibility of sin in general (humans) but not in specific (Christ). For instance, the testing of gold implies the possibility of things not being gold in general, but not the possibility of pure gold not being pure gold. The end of testing gold is to distinguish true gold from false gold. Thus, Christ's not falling in sin proves He could not sin. Since, Jesus is God and sin is rebellion against God, Jesus could not sin, for it is impossible for Him to rebel against Himself, unless His omniscience and omnipotence were brought into question. Thus, being human, He was tempted, but being divine and undivided in His moral nature, He was essentially holy and so could not sin.

AUTHORITY OF JESUS

1. He had all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt.28:18)
 - a. He always had it as God (John 17:5)
 - b. He had authority from God and gave it to His disciples (Matt.8:9-10)
 - c. After His resurrection, He was glorified and given all authority as the Second Man (Matt.28:18)
2. He had authority in teaching (Matt.7:29)
3. He had authority over demons and the powers of darkness (Mark 1:27)
4. He had authority over diseases (Matt.4:23)
5. He had authority to forgive sins (Matt.9:6)
6. He had authority over nature (Mark 4:39,41; 11:21)
7. He had authority over life and death
 - a. Over His life (John 5:24; 10:17,18)
 - b. To kill and to resurrect (Mark 10:28; Luk 7:14; 15; John 5:25)
 - c. To give eternal life (John 17:2)
8. Authority to execute judgment (John 5:27)

THE LORD OF THE SABBATH

"You shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary: I am the LORD." (Lev. 26:2)
"The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath." (Mark 2:28)

The Sabbath Law was very important in the Old Testament. We see, at least, four reasons behind its institution:

1. A CREATION BASIS

"For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it." (Exo.

20:11).

In the New Testament, whenever Jesus wanted to point at a Law that was valid, He referred to Genesis, the beginning. For instance, He argued that the original marital institution didn't permit divorce by referring to the Genesis account.

"They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her." And Jesus answered and said to them, "Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation, God "made them male and female." "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." (Mar 10:4-9)

Of course, the Sabbath law was not emphasized in the New Testament and its literal observance is not stipulated; but, that doesn't mean that the original Law was cancelled, as we will soon see.

2. A COVENANT SIGN

"Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant." (Ex.31:16)

The Sabbath was a sign of the Covenant between God and Israel. God commanded "Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you." (Exodus 31:13).

3. A CONSECRATED DAY

The Bible declares that God set this day apart as a holy day of rest.

"You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people." (Ex. 31:14)

"Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings." (Lev.23:3)

4. A COMMANDMENT OF GOD

"Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths: I am the LORD your God." (Lev.19:3)

God historically has commanded mankind to observe the Sabbath day of rest. The Sabbath certainly only applies to space-time, to the temporal historical framework of this life. It is a shadow of the eternal rest of God.

The Bible talks of many Sabbaths: Day of Atonement, Sabbath Feasts, Jubilee, etc.

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, all the commandments of the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) are reiterated except the Law of the Sabbath. Jesus Himself was accused by the Jews that He broke the Sabbath. But He didn't break it. Instead He fulfilled its meaning in Himself as we shall see.

1. THE SABBATH WAS MADE FOR MAN, & NOT MAN FOR SABBATH (MARK 2:27)

Thus, Jesus healed people on Sabbath Day (Luke 13:10ff; John 5) because man was more important than the Law of Sabbath, and the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. If a man would do his best to save his donkey that had fallen into a pit on Sabbath day then to save a man on the same day is multiple times more valid.

2. THE SON OF MAN (JESUS) IS LORD (MASTER, RULER) OF THE SABBATH (MARK 2:28; MAT 12:8; JOHN 7:22,23)

In other words, in Jesus the Sabbath finds its fulfillment.

Jesus is the Author and the Source of our Rest. In Him mankind finds true rest. He inaugurated the Year of Rest (Jubilee, Sabbath) for all. Therefore, He could call and say, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." In Him we are complete. That's why He is called the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, the Faithful and True Amen.

"sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ." (Col 2:16,17)

Hebrews 4 talks about the True Rest of God in Jesus. God's works were already completed from the foundation of the world (Heb 4:3), the Lamb was slain for the foundation of the world. We have entered the rest of God in Christ; THEREFORE, a SPECIAL SABBATH DAY IS NOT REQUIRED OF US.

IN JESUS, we experience:

- 1. A FINISHED WORK.** In Him all righteousness is fulfilled.
- 2. A FRUITFUL LIFE.** As we abide in Him, we bear fruit (There are works of the flesh, but not works of the Spirit -- only fruit of the Spirit).
- 3. FULFILLMENT OF JOY.** Fruitfulness brings fulfillment and joy.

THE TESTIMONY OF CHRIST ABOUT HIMSELF

Jesus didn't just make claims like "I am the Bread of Life" (Jn.6:48), "I am the Light of the world" (Jn.8:12), "I am the Gate" (Jn.10:9), "I am the Good Shepherd" (Jn.10:11), "I am the Resurrection and the Life" (Jn.11:25), and "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (Jn.14:6); Jesus also invited examination of His claims. He called upon men to examine the logic of His teaching and to evaluate what He said by what He did (Jn.10:38). There are a few characteristics of the testimony of Christ that we need to note:

1. The Testimony of Christ is Not Dependent upon the Testimony of Man. When Jesus was at Jerusalem and many people believed in Him because of the miraculous signs that He did, we are told that He would not entrust Himself to them for He knew all men and He did not need the testimony of man about man as well, for He knew what was in a man (Jn.2:25). Regarding the testimony of John the Baptist, Jesus said, "I do not receive testimony from man" (Jn.5:34). The reason, of course, was because it was impossible for any human being to testify of God; humans didn't qualify for that.

2. The Testimony of Christ is Self-Authenticating. In John 4:39, we are told that people believed in Jesus because of what the Samaritan woman said about Him; however, when they heard Jesus Himself they said, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world." (Jn. 4:42 NKJ) Were these people too credulous? How could they just believe in Christ because of the words He spoke, for anyone could say anything? The fact, however, is that the words of Jesus are unlike the words of any other human. Christ's testimony is unique. His testimony is self-authenticating. It is impossible to encounter Christ and remain the same, for anyone who encounters Christ has to make the choice to either reject or accept Him.

3. The Testimony of Christ is Authoritative and is Spiritually Recognized. The Gospel attests that Jesus spoke as one who had authority and not as the scribes (Matt.7:29). Several times He began His statements with the words "Truly, truly, I say unto you..." or simply "But, I say unto you," even when those statements seemed to oppose the Old Testament Law; however, He wasn't contradicting the Law but was establishing its real intent. Therefore, it is said that as long as the Jews read the Law a veil was over their face, but when anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is removed (2Cor.3:15,16). Authority and Testimony go together. For instance, when we see an ISI mark on a product sold in India, we understand that the product was examined by a standard authority and that authority bears testimony of the product by its ISI seal. Similarly, it is only the testimony of an authority on a driving license that establishes it as valid or invalid. Just anybody cannot issue licenses and degrees. A police officer who examines a driving license can tell if that license is acceptable or not. Jesus used the parable of the sheep to teach us that the sheep can recognize the voice of the Shepherd from that of the thief. Similarly, when God's Spirit works in the heart of man then the eyes of spirit can recognize spiritual truths as our physical eyes can distinguish colors; our spiritual ears can distinguish the voice of the Lord. Of course, this seems too subjective; but, this also proves that the attester is internal.

"But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ" (1Co 2:14-16 NKJ).

"If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own" (Jn.7:17 NIV).

"...no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit" (1Co 12:3 NKJ).

But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him" (1Jn. 2:27 NKJ).

4. The Testimony of Christ is Triune. This is an unbeatably unique characteristic of the testimony of Christ. He made it clear that a testimony cannot just be self-declarative. It must be supported by the testimony of persons equal to the declarer (or say, be examinable by an equivalent or higher authority). Therefore, He said, "If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid" (Jn.5:31 NIV). Also, since man is not equal to God nor qualifies to validate the kind of claims that Jesus made (because His claims were explicitly divine), Jesus refused the testimony of man. As we saw, He said, "I do not receive testimony from man" (Jn.5:34). But again, when the Pharisees objected that Jesus was testifying about Himself and so His testimony could not be valid, Jesus replied, "Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. (Jn. 8:14 NIV). Evidently, here again, He was pointing to the fact that there could be no earthly testimony about Him. No earthly academic or political or religious authority was qualified to testify of Him (neither did they testify of Him), and He was the only one who knew where He came from and where He was going. Therefore, it is very wrong headed for preachers today to seek testimony about Christ in anything other than the proclamation and work of Christ.

But, Jesus didn't stop at that. He explained to the people that He didn't mean that His testimony

was alone. This is where the intensity of the doctrine of Trinity comes in. No man or angel could testify of the claims of Christ, for their authority could only come from someone who is qualified to validate them; and since His claims were divine, only God could validate divine claims, and, there can be none greater than God. However, since God is Triune, the requirement of the Law to have more than two witnesses is fulfilled in Christ. He said, "In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two men is valid. I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me." (Jn. 8:17-18 NIV) Again, He said, "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, He will testify about me. (Jn. 15:26 NIV). Thus, it is Christ, the Father, and the Spirit that together testify of Christ, and their testimony is valid for their testimony is divine. The Father Himself testified of Jesus at His baptism and on the Mount of Transfiguration, and the Holy Spirit was sent to remind the disciples of Christ's words and to write the Scriptures:

"And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mat 3:17 NKJ).

"While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid" (Mat 17:5-6 NKJ).

"For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain" (2Pe 1:17-18 NKJ).

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you" (Jn. 14:26 NKJ).

"...the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow" (1Pe 1:11 NKJ).

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2Ti 3:16 NKJ).

5. The Testimony of Christ is Dynamic. The Triune testimony of Christ is not only verbal but also dynamic, i.e. it is validated by works. The Son does the work of the Father and the works testify of Him; similarly, the Spirit confirms the word today in the world through works that only God can do.

"...the works which the Father has given Me to finish-- the very works that I do-- bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me" (Jn. 5:36 NKJ).

"...though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him" (Jn.10:38 NKJ).

"Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father" (Jn.14:10-12 NKJ).

"If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father" (Jn. 15:24 NKJ).

"And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the

accompanying signs" (Mar 16:20 NKJ).

"And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover" (Mar 16:17-18 NKJ).

"God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will" (Heb 2:4 NKJ).

"Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts..." (Heb 3:7-8 NKJ).

Remember that the testimony by supernatural works that we see today in the world is not the testimony of man; it is the testimony of the Triune God (the Father, the Son, and the Spirit) in the world bearing testimony of Christ. He is not far from any of us (Acts 17:27). He is in the world testifying of Himself. He has not left the Church alone to bear testimony of Him (Jn.14:18; Acts 1:8). In fact, it is impossible to testify of Christ without the Spirit of Christ, and without Him we can do nothing (Jn.15:5; Col.1:29; 1Cor.15:10). It is He Himself who testifies and His testimony is true. And, "as He is, so are we in this world" (1Jn. 4:17 NKJ).

HUMANITY AND DIVINITY OF CHRIST

IN BEGINNING to write this article, I dare to add another string to a theme in the exposition of which, wrote Muggeridge, "literally billions *of* words, oceans of paint, acres of canvas, mountains of stone and marble, have been expended, not to mention, in recent times, miles of film" [*Jesus Rediscovered*]. But, it is a theme well deserved. Saints and sinners, critics and divines, princes and subjects, all have marveled at the magnificence of this event called the Incarnation of the Son of God, in which divinity united with humanity. It baffles human imagination to think that God would condescend to the state of a human. The Bible calls it the mystery of godliness (1Tim.3:16). Sacred in its very essence, it is the story of the love of the King of the Universe, a story so sacred that the colonnades of Romance tremble in disbelief.

That glorious Form, that Light unsufferable,
And that far-beaming blaze of Majesty,
Wherewith he wont at Heav'n's high council-table,
To sit the midst of Trinal Unity,
He laid aside, and here with us to be,
Forsook the courts of everlasting day,
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay.
[John Milton, *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*]

To the Apostle John it defined the essence and foundations of Christian ethics: "In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him... Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1Jn 4:9,11). For, if one but looks at human society and where we have faltered and then, at the Divine Community (the Trinity) and see how it stands, one wouldn't fail to perceive the brokenness of our kind that He came to heal with the love that binds heaven: "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us.... that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them" (Jn. 17:21, 26). And, He did that when He stepped into the skin of man, when the glory of infinite resplendence got wrapped into the frail flesh of a babe, and immortality encased itself in a mortal frame. Once and for all, the divine and human elements united, inseparably, yet without any admixture in the birth of the Son of Man.

Now, this truth is so sublime that history has bred several misconceptions, as well, in an attempt to fathom it. The misunderstandings must be cleared before we can proceed on to grasp what significance the manifestation of God in flesh has for us.

Clearing Misunderstandings

1. Christ's Humanity is not at the Expense of His Divinity, nor Vice Versa. To many of us this is, by fact of the matter, the truth. But, there are some cults, for instance, the Christadelphians, who deny the divinity of Christ and claim that Christ's life began in the womb of Mary. There are others, meanwhile, like the modern day Jehovah Witnesses for instance, who think that Jesus' life began a long time before His incarnation (a position similar to the one held by a bishop called Arius, whose heresy was condemned at the Council of Nicaea in AD 325). The Bible, however, very specifically teaches us that Christ's life is without any beginning or end (Heb.7:3). He is eternal, and therefore is called the Son of God. Alexander of Constantinople (ca. 244-337) was right when he said that the Fatherhood of the Father is eternal, likewise the Sonship of the Son is eternal as well; therefore, Christ has eternally been the Son of God.

There have been others, besides, like the Adoptionists, for instance, who taught that Jesus was adopted at His baptism and thence became the Son of God. The Docetists taught that the humanity of Jesus was a mere illusion and the Monophysitists believed that Christ had only one nature, His humanity being swallowed up by His divinity. Of the Monophysist group, the Eutychianists believed that the humanity and divinity of Christ were fused to produce a single nature. Contrary to all these heretical views, the Bible clearly reveals Christ as fully human and fully divine; both the divine and human natures being united in His person without any confusion or mixture of any kind (Col.2:9).

2. Misunderstandings in Islam. There is another misunderstanding, especially among our Muslim friends, that we teach Jesus to be the Son of God in the sense that He was conceived by Mary through some kind of union with God. That would be incorrect from the Biblical point of view as well. For, the Scripture clearly states that the conception of Jesus in Mary's womb was by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit (Lk.1:35). Jesus was not produced. He incarnated. Various ancient mythologies falsely talk of their gods coming and cohabiting with women to produce semi-divine offspring. Such myths are both false and unbiblical. The Incarnation was not so. For, in it the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, God the Son Himself, took on the form of man (Phil.2:6,7). Jesus was not a third element produced from the fusion of the divine and the human. There was no mixture of natures. He was fully God and fully man. The Incarnation did not make Christ the Son of God. He was eternally the Son of God. In the Incarnation, He assumed human nature and became the Son of Man. Through the Virgin Mary He became the Seed of the woman that would finally crush the head of Satan (Gen.3:15; Gal.4:4).

3. Essential Differences between Christ's Incarnation and the Avataras. The four main differences between the **avatara** and the Incarnation relate to the nature, duration, mission, and instances of the two concepts. In its nature, the mythological **avatara** is not completely the form that it assumes; but in the Incarnation, Christ became fully human; not merely in appearance but in essence and reality. Also, the duration of the **avatara** is limited, after which it returns to its original form; however, in the Incarnation Christ became permanently human; He continues to be the Son of Man, our High Priest in heaven and the Glorious King who will one day return to reign from David's throne. Next, the mission of the **avatara** is conceived to be the destruction of evil forces or personalities; on the contrary, the mission of the Son of Man was to seek and save them that were lost – a propitiatory mission that meant His ultimate sacrifice on

the Cross. Finally, the **avatara** is said to repeat for at least ten instances to put an end to evil. But, the Incarnation of Christ was once for all. It was final. There cannot and need not be a second Incarnation; for He already is Man forever and He has finished His propitiatory mission on earth (Heb.9:26,28; 10:10-14).

God in Flesh for Us

Apart from the facts that we have noted regarding the Incarnation as being real (not mere appearance), complete (not partial), permanent, propitiatory, and final, there are some important truths that the Bible wishes us to know.

1. The *Logos* of Fellowship. As the Incarnate Word (*Logos*), Christ stands as the Reason and Logic of our acceptance into the family of God. In the Incarnation, Christ partook of human nature, so that through Him we might become partakers of the divine nature and experience the glorious liberty of the children of God (Heb.2:14; Rom.8:15-17,21,23). Paul mentions that Jesus was made in the likeness of men (Phil.2:7) and John records that He was made flesh (Jn.1:14), both using the same Greek word **ginomai** for “made”, asserting the realness of His humanity. This doesn’t imply that there was any change in His divinity. That could never be; for, God is beyond change – He is immutable. But, since “the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb.2:14-15; cf. Col.1:13).

He became one of us so that we, through Him, might become His forever. Therefore, all that have received Him have received the right to be called the children of God (Jn.1:12). He partook of human nature, so that we might have the right to partake of the divine nature (2Pet.1:4; Rev.2:7) by becoming partakers of that one Bread who came for our salvation (1Cor. 10:17; Jn.6:51), who through His death offered Himself for us an eternal peace offering so that we can be accepted into His divine fellowship by partaking of His Body (Jn. 6:51, 54-56; Matt.26:26; Deut.27:7; Lev.7:15). Unlike the sacrifices of the Old Testament, the Sacrifice of Jesus needs no repetition, for He lives forever, as the Reason of our acceptability. The Lamb that was slain lives (Rev.5:6). Those who partake of Him will never hunger again; He is the Bread of Life. Now, the promise of a blessed resurrection and a glorious eternity remains for all those who have accepted Him; because, through death He has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through His Gospel (1Cor.15:44,52,53; Heb.4:1; 2Tim.1:10).

2. The *Logos* of New Creation. Also, in the Incarnation, Christ did not just become a man; He became the Last Adam and the Second Man. He put an end to the old and began the new. Therefore, He says “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev.21:5). He bore the earthly image, so that we might bear His heavenly one (1Cor. 15:49, 45,47).

Both the titles, “Last Adam” and “Second Man” refer to His role as the Seed of the woman. His heel was truly bruised when on the Cross He bled and died for the sins of sinful Adamic race. He took upon Him the guilt of the old world and met death face to face. The Seed fell to the ground; sin was destroyed (Rom.8:3) - the world was wrapped in silence and darkness. Then, He arose. The Seed sprouted and He arose as a New Man, the Second Man, and the Beginner of a new race that was born not of the will of flesh, but was born of God. Natural did the Seed die, but Spiritual did He arise; for the Seed was not merely Adamic, the Seed was the Eternal Son of God. Death could not vanquish Him, nor could the grave hold Him forever; for, He offered Himself once for all by the Eternal Spirit (Heb.9:14), dealing an irreparable death-blow to death itself. What mortal could qualify for such a sacrifice? For man must first pay for his own transgressions and burn for it eternally in the angry flames of hell, before he could do it for

others; and, even if he were to suffer for other men, besides, the punishment would only be everlasting, with no hope of a resurrection. But, the Eternal One took upon Himself our eternal punishment and infinitely suffered it in time. Thus, by death He defeated the devil that had power over death; He crushed the head of the serpent and brought to naught the kingdom of darkness. By His resurrection, He obtained for us justification, redemption, adoption, and newness of life, so that we are now accepted before the Father in the Beloved. As the Second Man, He became the author of our faith and salvation, the Head of the Body which is His Church. (See Gen.3:15; Heb.2:14,15; 1Cor.15:20-23, 44-49, 55; Jn.12:24; 1:12-13; Eph.2:15; Rom.4:25; 8:3-4,10-11; 6:3-10; Heb.5:9; 12:2; Eph.1:4,22; Col.1:18).

The prophets of the Old Testament looked forward with anticipation to this day; but, God has given us the grace to be born in the Sunrise of His Love. We live in **Anno Domini**, the Year of our Lord. Let's live our days for Christ our King!

DID JESUS EVER CLAIM TO BE GOD? DID HE EVER USE THE WORDS "I AM GOD"?

Though Jesus didn't use the exact words "I am God", that doesn't mean that He never said that He is God. One doesn't need to use the same framing of words to convey a message; the same message can be communicated in different compositions of sentences. For instance, note the following sentences which all convey the message, "I am employed."

1. I work for a Company.
2. My boss pays me well for my work.
3. I am very busy at office during the day.
4. The staff had a picnic last Saturday.
5. I would like to change my job.

So, the right kind of question to ask with reference to the doctrine of Christ's divinity would not be "Did Jesus ever use the words "I am God"?" Instead, one should ask something like, "Did Jesus ever convey the message that He was divine?" To that question, the answer is a definite "Yes." In fact, the "Yes" is too clear, because **the claim to divine sonship (which the Jews understood as a claim to divinity) was one reason why the Jewish leadership condemned Jesus as a blasphemer and demanded His execution. Let's look at some of Christ's related claims:**

1. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (Joh 3:16 NKJ). Jesus claimed to be God's "only begotten Son"; but, that is not all, He states that God gave this only begotten Son so that whoever believes in the Son should not perish but have everlasting life. Now, some may object that this claim was a later theological construct; not a claim by Jesus but an interpolation by the apostles. This interpolation-theory, however, is because of the prejudiced made-up mindset that Jesus was not God. It is not based on proof but on prejudice.

2. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you." And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, "Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mar 2:5-7 NKJ). Evidently, here Jesus is doing something that the Jews were aware that only God can do. Not even a prophet or a priest could forgive a sin committed against others and against

God. I can only forgive sins of those who sinned against me; but, I cannot forgive sins of those who have sinned against the Law of God; because if I do that I try to take the place of God. Jesus, obviously, knew this. But, He didn't stop just at that. He affirmed His authority to forgive sins by an act of divine power.

"When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you." And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, "Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mar 2:5-7 NKJ)

3. Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments."

(Mat 19:16-17 NKJ) In this statement, Jesus not only conveys the message that no human can claim to be good or try to have eternal life by virtue of good works (for none is good), but He also forces the young rich man to reconsider his calling Jesus as the Good Teacher; for if he really believed Jesus was Good, it meant that he equated Him with God. Jesus foils the human quest for autonomy and desire to independently, by virtue of personal merit, inherit eternal life -- no one can be good apart from God. This He proves by asking the young man to sell all his possessions, distribute them to the poor, so that He will have treasures in heaven, and to follow Him,. But, the young man was not willing to part with his riches since he wished to have a life independent of God--that was impossible; it is not possible to be independent of God and have eternal life--for that would mean sin co-existing with life, which is contradictory to divine Justice:

Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever "-- therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. (Gen 3:22-23 NKJ)

But, by answering the question of the rich young man, Jesus has affirmed that He could authoritatively show how one could have eternal life; authoritatively, because He had eternal life. It meant both that He was Good (which no man but God was) and that He knew how one could have eternal life. He tells him to do something beyond the Old Testament command, He asks him to sell all he has, distribute it to the poor (so that he will have treasure in heaven), and to follow Him (Matt.19:21). Obviously, by asking the young man to follow Him in relation to eternal life, He is making a claim that no human can make (for "no one is good but One, that is, God.")

4."I and My Father are one."

Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.

Jesus answered them, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?"

The Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God."

Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, "You are gods"?"

"If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken),

"do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God '?"

"If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me;

"but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him."

Therefore they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand. (Joh 10:30-

39 NKJ)

There are a number of clauses here that convey Christ's claim to divinity: (a) He calls Himself one with the Father (b) They understand His claim as blasphemous because, as they say, "You, being a Man, make Yourself God."). (c) Jesus replies by quoting Psalm 82:6, where God calls humans as "gods"; so if He called them gods, to whom the word of God came, then why should they consider it blasphemous if the one whom "the Father sanctified and sent into the world" said not "I am God" but "I am the Son of God". Obviously, Jesus was evoking their understanding of His statements as conveying the idea of His affirmation of His divinity. They obviously knew that there was a difference between God saying "You are gods" in Psalm 82:6 and Jesus saying "I and My Father are one." The statement of Jesus clearly meant that He was claiming to be God. Secondly, He refers to Himself as the one "whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world". In other words, He was claiming pre-existence (His birth of the world was not the beginning of His life but the event of His being sent into the world). It also implies His greatness above every other human; for if those to whom the word of God came could be called "gods", then what is wrong the One who was sanctified and sent into the world calling Himself "the Son of God"? (d) Jesus also says that "the Father is in Me, and I in Him", which again provokes them to try to seize Him.

5. Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by. (Joh 8:57-59 NKJ) The message here is too clear to miss. Jesus claims in the present tense "I AM" to exist before Abraham (i.e. before Abraham was born). In other words, His existence predates the Father of the Jewish race, Abraham. Thus, though He was the son of Abraham, according to the flesh, His existence is (not was) before Abraham. The I AM (the Name of God as revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:14) also affirms that His existence is trans-temporal, that is infinite and eternal. As such, He is not a creature but the Creator. No surprise, the Jews were infuriated again by this claim and wanted to stone Jesus. For them, no existing human could claim to be greater than Abraham, their father.

Several Scriptural proofs exist for the divinity of Christ. Following are some verses that corroborate the divinity of His Person:

1. Preincarnate

Pre-existence (Jn. 1:1; 1Jo. 1:1; Jn. 17:5).

Participation in creation (Gen. 1:26; Prov. 8:30; Col. 1:15; Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:16; 1Co. 8:6).

Christophanies (Gen.18,19; Hos.1:7; Gen.22,31; Exo. 3:2; Exo. 14:19; Num. 22:22; Judg.6).

2. Divine Nature

Divine Attributes (eternal- Jn. 1:1; Jn. 8:58; Jn. 17:5; omnipresent- Mt. 28:20; Eph. 1:23; omniscient- Jn.16:30;21:17; omnipotent- Jn.5:19; immutable- Heb. 1:12; Heb. 13:8)

Divine Offices (Creator- Joh 1:3; Col 1:16; Sustainer- Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3)

Divine Prerogatives (forgives sin – Mt. 9:2; Luk. 7:47; raises dead- Jn. 5:25; Jn. 11:25; executes judgement- Jn. 5:22)

Identified with OT YHWH - I AM (Jn. 8:58; Jn. 12:41; Jn. 8:24; Jn. 8:50-58)

Divine Names (Alpha & Omega-Rev. 22:13; I AM –Jn. 8:58; Immanuel- Mt. 1:22; Lord-Mt. 7:21; Son of God- Jn. 10:36; God- Jn. 1:1; 2Pe. 1:1; Tit. 2:13; 1Jo. 5:20)

Divine Relations (Image of God- Col. 1:15; Hb.1:3; One with Father- Jn. 10:30)

Accepts Divine Worship (Mt. 14:33; Mt. 28:9; Jn. 20:28-29). Claims to be God (Jn.8:58; Jn.

10:30; Jn. 17:5 – in such case, He is either liar, lunatic, or the Lord that He claims to be, but never can be regarded as merely a good moral teacher)

Any quick perusal of the Gospels will clearly demonstrate to the unbiased mind that Jesus did claim again and again to be divine.

HOW CAN JESUS BE FULLY GOD AND FULLY MAN AT THE SAME TIME?

Answer 1:

A contradiction can be defined in the terms "A=not-A"; a non-contradiction, in the terms "A≠not-A".

- The statements "Jesus is fully God" and "Jesus is fully man" don't involve such a contradiction, i.e, they don't say "Jesus is fully God," and "Jesus is not fully God" at the same time.
- Christian theology doesn't claim to say that Jesus is not God when it says Jesus is Man; likewise, it doesn't claim to say that Jesus is not man when it says that Jesus is God.

Answer 2:

- The divinity of Christ is eternal and immutable; therefore, in the Incarnation He was fully God. He was not created; He pre-existed. He was not born out of a man-woman relationship; but, was born of a Virgin; because He incarnated, He didn't come into being - there was not when He didn't exist.
- In the Incarnation, God partook of human nature; He could do that because He created the world and so the world belonged to Him and He sustained it. The world didn't cut off from Him in a way that God and creation were unrelated to each other. The world had not become a "wholly other" to God. The world was not closed out to God, as if it were an infinite and absolute entity by itself. The fact was that the world was contingent on Him. The world couldn't restrict His power. In fact, it was He who held it by the word of His power (Heb 1:3). The world is not eternal; it is temporal; therefore, it is impossible for the world (including man) to become God. That would be a contradiction of terms. However, the Second Person of the Divine Trinity did become man, because His creation was not beyond His reach. The temporal exists within the eternal; and the finite within the infinite (not vice versa). "In Him we live and move and have our being." (Acts 17:28). This is not pantheism or panentheism. It doesn't say the world contains God as its soul or the world is God; but, that the world is contingent upon God, therefore not beyond His reach. Miracles are possible, Divine intervention is possible (the universe is not closed) and the Incarnation is the greatest example of God's intervention in human history.

MEDIATORSHIP OF CHRIST

Some Principles of Judgment in Relationships

1. Not to make a personal judgment about any person without knowing the person personally. "Do not judge!" (Matt 7:1) We have no reasons to subscribe to any other person's judgment about any other person.
2. A person is not what he/she was in the past, but what he/she is in the present – we must be reminded of the power of God that can transform a person in the split of a moment; so, the situation of even an hour ago is not proof enough to make a judgment about the present situation. To condemn anyone as a hopeless situation is to deny the love and the power of God.
3. Christ is the Mediator in all relationships for a Christian.

The third principle is central to both 1 and 2 as well. I wish to elaborate my thoughts on 3.

The Vertical-Horizontal Mediatorship of Christ



Christ not only destroyed the wall of separation between God and man, but also brought down the wall of separation between man and man (Eph.2:11-16). Thus, we not only have peace with God through Christ; but, there is also peace among men through Christ. The word "through" is ultra-significant.

The Vertical Mediatorship unites the Horizontal Relationship. This makes possible the Communion of the Spirit. God only indwells an integrated house, not a disintegrated house.

Christ is the Mediator through whom we relate to God as our Father. Christ is the Mediator through whom we relate to our neighbor as neighbor.

Christ is the Mediator through whom we relate to all humanity as the beloved of the Father (John 3:16).

Christ is the Mediator through whom a friend relates to a friend, a husband relates to his wife (and vice versa), a parent relates to his/her child (and vice versa), a boss relates to his/her employee (and vice versa).

Any relationship that is not mediated through Christ is Christless – it bears no fruit (John 15:5).

Any relationship that is not mediated through Christ our High Priest is vulnerable to the enemy's

attack.

When we relate through Christ, the boundaries of the relationship are defined by Christ.
When we relate through Christ, the nature of the relationship is determined by Christ.

Christ as fully God and fully man is the perfect Mediator between God and Man, and Man and Man. The Mediatorship is individual and personal; not corporate – each one has the prerogative of making the choice to submit to His High Priesthood.

Christ's Ubiquitous Centrality



The centrality of Christ in our relationships with people is not like a dot in the center (Fig 2). His centrality is ubiquitous intra-relationally and inter-relationally. It spreads over and stands in the gap between every relation of ours, mediating each act and response (Fig 3). He must rule over our thoughts about ourselves and our thoughts about others. While it is possible that one has views and opinions that are disintegrative to the Body; we can affirm that such disintegrative thoughts are neither in Christ nor from Christ nor through Christ. The centrality of Christ in relation to each of us is like the relation of each part of the body to the other through the brain (Eph.4:15,16).

The analogies are physical but Christ's Mediatorship is personal (intra-personal, Phil 2:5; inter-personal, Rom.15:7).

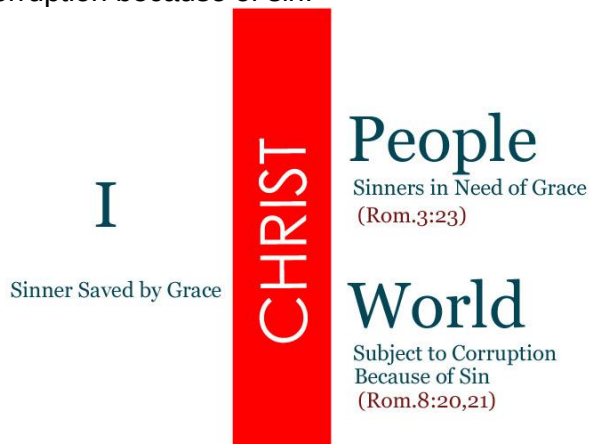
Christ is central to all relationships. His Lordship covers every avenue of our life.

The mediatorship of Christ, as we saw earlier, is not only between man and God but also between man and man. He comes in between every relationship. He is the Lord of all. In Him, relationships find true meaning and purpose. He comes between parent and child, sibling and sibling, friend and friend, wife and husband and we only relate to each other through Him.



The same applies to our relationship with things, treasures, situations in life, and time. He comes between as Lord and mediator in all things. He stands between the storm and the believer, between an event and the disciple. Nothing happens by accident when Christ rules over a situation. He comes between me and the trains or buses I need to board or have boarded. He comes between me and diseases. Therefore, I cannot just do what I like and go where I want but must do all things in Him and through Him. When He is Lord, He controls all things, supervises all that things - even our connections and people we meet. And when we ask anything in prayer in His name, there is no chance for chance, because all things are by Him, through Him, and for Him - He answers our prayers. In fact, the dispensations of history will come to an end only in Him (Eph.1:10). When He stands in the middle, He leads the way without fail.

Christ stands between the Christian who is a sinner saved by grace and the world of sinners in need of God's saving grace. He also stands between the Christian and a world subject to corruption because of sin.



Christ stands not as a mediating principle but as the Person, the Lord, controlling all things in between. His mediatorship affirms His centrality and sovereignty over our lives. Nothing happens by chance or human whim when He comes in between. Therefore, there can be no

room for fear, for worry. There can be no room for bitterness or unforgiveness, because whatever happened happened because He has mediated and intervened.

ATONEMENT

The doctrine of reconciliation teaches us that the world is at enmity with God and so Christ came to reconcile the world to God. He did that through His atoning sacrifice by the Eternal Spirit. Now, He appoints His servants as ambassadors in the hostile world and has given them the ministry of reconciliation. It is a ministry of reconciliation on God's terms; not a ministry at the mercy of the world in the world's terms. We are not called to make peace with the world at the expense of the Cross; we are here to declare the Goodnews that peace has been made by Christ on the Cross. The Cross will be a stumbling block to many, because they would like that the offence of the Cross didn't exist, so that peace would be natural. But, that is the same as being worldly and thus in enmity with God. The Cross is where the world is crucified to the Christian and the Christian to the world. You cannot be worldly and Christian at the same time. The world essentially loves its own and hates Christ and the Father; so, reconciliation consists in leaving the rebellion and submitting to the Lordship of Christ.

There are some who disagree that salvation is through the acceptance of the Lordship of Christ. However, the very idea of redemption is about buying a slave from a slave market. The one who bought us is our Lord and Master. The sense of "belongedness" is intense.

The world, essentially, belongs to Christ; because all things were made through Him and for Him. But, the world has rejected His authority through its decision to be like God, and thus itself becoming the criteria of good and evil. When man ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he had determined to shift the center of morality from Christ to self - the essence of humanism. So, when Christ came to His own, His own rejected Him; i.e. declared through word and action that neither they belonged to Him nor He to them. Yet, the one to whom we all belonged had chosen to belong to us, by becoming flesh and blood and make His habitation with us.

The reason why the Son of God came to the world was because the world was made through Him – it ultimately belonged to Him. It was lost; yet, it was His. He was willing to leave alone the 99 in order to seek this one that was lost. But the world did not recognize Him, His own didn't receive Him. There are sharp, acute, and yet distinct pictures here. The pictures are sharper in prose than any poetry can portray.

The world is not the world as a whole and yet it is the world as a whole. Not everybody failed to recognize Him, and not everybody rejected Him; and, yet in the moment of the Sacrifice, that was what happened. The world as a whole was represented by the leaders (both religious and political) who put to death the Son of God. The depth of estrangement and contortion was manifest in the kind of death administered: the death of the Cross. It was the world that failed to recognize Him – the world that belonged to Him. Yet, the real story is not that the world rejected Him; the real story is that He was willing to let the world reject Him. Divine self-emptying, divine servanthood, and divine crucifixion are powerful themes that shock the philosophy of religion. Nietzsche called the greatest of all sins to be the murder of God (deicide). There was nothing more sinful than that. On the reverse, the greatest of all righteousness fulfilled was in the self-giving of the Son of God. This self-giving brought an end to the history of hostility between man and God. It cancelled all debts. Man had committed the greatest of all crimes, and God had

allowed it to be done to Him in the ultimate divine sacrifice. The Cross was where Justice and Love met vis-à-vis. It was where man affirmed his estrangement and God affirmed His belongedness. It was where God accepted man as he was.

The one act of righteousness by the Son of God nullified forever the writ of accusation against all humanity. The veil was torn away; the entrance is paved, now the ball is in our court. He has accepted us. Do we receive Him or choose to remain estranged?

Therefore, "as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name."

HOW COULD AN INNOCENT MAN DIE FOR THE SINS OF THE WORLD?

The Scandal of Particularity questions how one Man could be God and also be the Savior of the whole world. There are two pictures in the Bible that answer this:

1. Surety. Jesus Christ is made the surety of the New Covenant by which participants in the Covenant share in the blessings of the Covenant (Hebrews 7:22). Now, a surety is someone who provides a warrant or guarantee for an other. If I wish to borrow Rs.5000/- from a creditor, and he doesn't trust me, he would ask for a guarantor or surety, who answers to him and is willing to pay in case I am not able to pay the amount back. Similarly, when we were weak and without strength, and in a state when we could not repay our debts, Christ paid the penalty of our sins.

2. Priest. A Priest is a legally appointed Mediator who represents man before God; as such, Christ, appointed after the order of Melchizedek as a Priest forever, provides a better sacrifice than the blood of animals that the priests after the Aaronic order presented for centuries before Him. Their sacrifices couldn't have efficacy since they had to make atonement for their own sins first, then for the sins of the people. In addition, the blood of animals cannot adequately atone for the sins of mankind. Through the offering of His Body, the High Priest Jesus Christ, opens up a way for us before God. We now have access to the Father. His appointment was official and His sacrifice without blemish; therefore, it was fully acceptable and satisfactory in the sight of God, and we also in Him.

DID JESUS GO TO HELL AFTER HIS DEATH ACCORDING TO 1PETER 3:19-20?

1. Most scholars such as Albert Barnes, Adam Clarke, John Calvin and John Wesley believed that this referred to Christ's preaching to the people in the days of Noah. Through the preaching of Noah, he strove with men (Genesis 6:3; something like in 2 Corinthians 5:19; also see 1Peter 1:11; 1Corinthians 10:4, 9; Hebrews 4:2).

2. Another interpretation, especially by the Roman Catholic Church, is found in the Apostle's Creed affirmation that Jesus descended into hell. It is based on 1 Peter 3:19, 4:6; Acts 2:27; Romans 10:7; Ephesians 4:9; Revelation 1:17-18.

I think the first interpretation is theologically better for many theological reasons:

1. Man doesn't have a chance to repent after death; so, there is no use to preaching to the dead. Both 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6 would refer to those people who are now in prison or are dead. The Gospel was preached to them while they were alive.

2. The passage doesn't say that Jesus went to hell. It says that He went and preached to the spirits in prison, that is, who are still now in prison. If it were not so, Peter would have said "spirits who were in prison".
3. Some think that Jesus went and announced His victory to these spirits, He did not evangelize them. There is no scriptural reference for such idea. Colossians 2:15 refers to Christ obliterating all writ of condemnation against us through the cross. It doesn't mean He went to hell and defeated Satan.

RESURRECTION OF CHRIST VS RESUSCITATIONS

One important question in connection with the resurrection of Jesus asks how the resurrection of Jesus can be different from any other instance of a person coming back to life. For certain, there are numerable cases of people being resuscitated by medical means and cases of those who were raised from the dead supernaturally. The Bible also records cases of people who were raised from the dead: the son of the widow of Zarepheth, raised by Elijah in 1 Kings 17:7-24; Jairus's daughter in Matthew 9:18-26, the son of the widow of Nain in Luke 7:11-17, and Lazarus in John 11:38-44, raised by Jesus; Tabitha in Acts 9:40 by Peter, and Eutychus by Paul in Acts 20:7-12.

For the sake of this article, and for the benefit of theological distinction, let's call the other cases of people coming back to life, in the same body that they died, as "resuscitation" and distinguish it from the "resurrection" of Jesus Christ.

In this article we will point at 20 differences between resurrection and resuscitation (which term, only for the sake of this article, includes also miraculous reviving of the body, but not in the order of the resurrection of Jesus).

1. The resurrection of Jesus was permanent and everlasting (Rom.6:9); however, resuscitation was temporary. Even those who were raised from the dead in the Bible died a mortal's death later on.
2. The resurrection of Jesus transformed His flesh in a supernatural way. Jesus could pass through locked doors (John 20:19), travel faster than anything (Matt.28:7), and was free from the laws of nature (1Cor.15:44); however, in resuscitation there is no such change in the human body.
3. The resurrection of Jesus transformed His body to become imperishable, glorious, invincible, and spiritual (1Cor.15:42-44); in resuscitation, the body still is perishable, vile, and subject to the material laws of thermodynamics.
4. The resurrection of Jesus transformed His body for ascension to the right hand of God as the Second Man and as heir of all things (1Cor.15:47-50; Rom.1:4; Heb.1:2-4; Rev.19:15); the resuscitated body in its unchanged condition cannot inherit the kingdom of God (1Cor.15:50).
5. In His resurrection Jesus became the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep [died] (1Cor.15:20,23); all those raised from the dead otherwise are not counted as part of this order of "new creation" resurrection.

6. In His resurrection, Jesus became the antitype of Adam; so that while in the latter all died because of his sin, now through the righteousness of Christ those who believe in Him will be made alive (1Cor.15:22; Rom.5:17,18). Resuscitation is the mere reviving of a body without any connection to the typology of Adam.

7. In His resurrection, Jesus became the author of new life (Rom.6:4); resuscitations are only revival to the old Adamic life, biologically speaking.

8. In His resurrection, Jesus conquered death so that death has no longer any dominion over Him (Rom.6:9; 8:3; 1Cor.15:55-57); all the others who were only resuscitated were still subject to physical death.

9. Jesus claimed that He had power to lay down His life and take it back again (John 10:18); those raised otherwise cannot make that claim.

10. The death and resurrection of Jesus had cosmic ("in Him"), creational ("die..live"), and salvific ("those who believe") significance (Rom.7:4); the raising from the dead of others had no cosmic, creational, and salvific significance.

11. The death and resurrection of Jesus was eschatological, in that it was the firstfruits that guaranteed, at the end of the age, the resurrection of those who died in Christ (1Cor.15:23,24,26); that of those raised otherwise had no such eschatological significance.

12. The resurrection of Jesus was in the power and might of the Holy Spirit (Rom.1:4; 8:11; Phil.3:10) – remember, the angel didn't roll away the stone for Jesus to get out, but for the women to get in; in raising from the dead, otherwise, the body would still be weak (Mark 5:43; John 11:44).

13. In the resurrection of Jesus, His body was sown in weakness but raised in power (1Cor.15:43); in resuscitations, the body may not even be considered sown and raised in such categories that can only be applied to the resurrection of Jesus, and then the body is still weak.

14. The resurrection of Jesus transformed His body to become free from the need of physical sustenance by food and drink (though, He could still eat, Luke 24:42,43); those raised otherwise still needed food, drink, shelter, and air to live (Mark 5:43).

15. The resurrection of Jesus provided hope of eternal life and defined the totality of the Gospel (1Cor.15:17-20); the resuscitations of others were just personal experiences.

16. In the resurrection of Jesus, His body was transformed according to the supernatural energetic power by which He subdues all things unto Himself (Phil.3:21); the resuscitations only revived the body but didn't subdue anything.

17. The resurrection of Jesus is the soteriological ground for the Holy Spirit to work in our bodies to give us victory over sin (Rom.8:11-14); the other resuscitations were mere physical reviving of bodies with no soteriological significance.

18. The resurrection of Jesus was a sign of life or death – it obligated people to a response in the Crucified and Risen Savior (Matt.12:39,40; Rom.10:9; 1Pet.1:21); the resuscitations were

not necessary signs of any such or other kind – for instance, in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, Abraham didn't respond to the rich man's request to send Lazarus back from the dead as a sign; because according to him, the Scriptures had more authority than the testimony of someone raised from the dead (Luke 16:30,31).

19. The resurrection of Jesus made His body spiritual (1Cor.15:44), so that though He has flesh and bones (Luke 24:39), He is called a life-giving Spirit (1Cor.15:45); but, those merely resuscitated are still raised in their natural (breathing, Gr. psuchikos) bodies subject to the laws of physical nature. (Note the contrast in 1Cor.15:45, "The first man Adam became a breathing creature, the last Adam became a life-giving spirit" (rendition mine), suggesting that the resurrected body of Jesus is not a breathing but a fully spiritual body).

20. The resurrection of Jesus is the ontological basis for not only the resurrection of those who die in Him, but also for the glorification of the bodies of those who are still alive at His coming (1Cor.15:51,52; Phil.3:21; 1Jn.3:2); the resuscitations were only shadowy and unparticular and anyone raised from the dead, not in order of the resurrection of Jesus, can only be saved and glorified by becoming part of the eschatological resurrection that the resurrection of Jesus provides ground for and promises, i.e., the resurrection of new creation (Heb.11:35).

PNEUMATOLOGY

The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. He is God.

NAMES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is called in the Bible by various names such as ‘the Spirit of God’ (Gen. 1:2), “the Spirit of Truth” (Jn. 14:17), “the Holy Spirit” (Lk. 11:13), “the Spirit of Holiness” (Rom. 1:4), and “the Comforter” (Jn. 14:26). The Holy Spirit is the Creator of all things and the Giver of life (Job 33:4; Ps. 104:30). He is the one who inspired the writing of the Scriptures (2 Pet. 1:21). It is through Him that God’s miraculous gifts are manifest in the whole world through God’s people (1 Sam. 10:10; Acts 10:38; 1 Cor. 12). He is the giver of understanding of spiritual matters (Job 32:8; Isa. 11:2). It is He who anoints God’s servants and by Him they are sanctified and consecrated for ministry (Acts 10:38; 1 Jn. 2:27). He is the Great Witness of Jesus Christ who convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (Jn. 15:26; 16:8). It is by His indwelling filling that the disciples receive power to be the witnesses of Christ in all the world (Acts 1:8).

The Holy Spirit is

1. Helper (*parakletos*) – Advocate – One Who Comes Along Side to Help (John 16:7)

Rom. 8:26 – Helps in Weakness

Rom. 8:26 – Helps in Expression of Prayer (Abba Father, Access through the Spirit Eph.2:18)

Eph. 3:16 – Strengthens Inner Man (Gives Power)

Rom. 8:13 – Helps to Mortify Deeds of Flesh

2 Tim. 1:7 – Gives Sound Mind

2. Convictor (*elegkho*) – Reproves, Rebukes, Admonishes (With Sternness) – (John 16:8) Of Sin, Righteousness, Judgment

Sin (The Holy Spirit through Witness of the Church Makes the World Speechless Before God) – 1Pet.2:15, Rom.3:20.

Righteousness (The Holy Spirit through the Life of the Church Makes the World Speechless Before God) – 2Pet.2:9

Judgment (The Holy Spirit through His Power in the Church Makes the World Speechless Before God) – 1Jn.3:8, Rom.15:9, Heb.2:4

3. Spirit of Truth - Guide (*hodegeo*) – Shows the Way (John 16:3)

Many Things to Say (Completion of NT Canon Yet)

Will Guide You Into All Truth (Jesus Christ the Treasure of All Wisdom and Knowledge) – "He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you."

-Revelation

-Illumination (Understanding)

4. Glorifier of Christ (John 16:14)

The essence of the Holy Spirit’s ministry is the testimony and glorifying of Christ. Not the glory of any man, the personal wellbeing of any man, but the glory of the Son.

5. Guarantee of our Inheritance (2Cor.1:22; 5:5; Eph.1:14; Rom.8:16-17)

6. Baptizer of Believer into the Body of Christ (1Cor.12:13)

7. Anointing of Power for Christian Walk and Ministry (Lk.24:49; Acts 1:8; Acts 10:38; Rom.15:13,19; 1Cor.2:4; 2Tim.1:7)

8. Witness of Christ in the World (John 15:26; 1John 5:6-8)

EARNESTLY DESIRING THE BEST OF THE GIFTS

God wants each of us to be filled with His Holy Spirit and be loaded with the gifts of the Spirit for His ministry.

He wants to use each one of us:

"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all" (1Co 12:7 NKJ)

We are members of His body. No man would ever want any part of his body to be left unused. Nobody would say, "I will shut my nose off and not use it". God wants to use each one of us.

However, the question is do we want to be used of God? Really?

There are two things spoken to us in 1Corinthians 12-14 that are essential in the pursuit of the gifts of the Spirit.

1. Zeal and Intense Passion for the Gifts

"Earnestly desire the best gifts. (1Co 12:31 NKJ)

"Desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. (1Co 14:1 NKJ)

The word for "desire" is **zeloo** and means "intense zeal". It is the same word from which the word "zealot" comes. The zealots were a terrorist group, a do or die people. To be zealous for the best gifts is to be so fully consumed of desire for the gifts that it is like a do or die situation. Jesus said that if we genuinely and persistently ask for the Spirit, the Father will give. He won't give His precious gifts to those who only half-heartedly seek them. Because, then, they never understand the value of the same. A really zealous person is like a thirsty man who cannot give up looking for water till he found water to drink. So, a person who is zealously seeking the gifts of the Spirit cannot find rest until God has filled him. Such person will not sleep and slumber in prayer. He will not get bored of prayer times. He will pray in the Spirit; he will enquire, seek, follow.

2. The More Excellent Way Called Love

"And yet I show you a more excellent way." (1Co 12:31)

"Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts." (1Co 14:1)

God will never entrust His power to somebody who doesn't have God's love.

-Power without Love is destructive. It will destroy both the one who possesses the power and those around that person.

-Power without Love is immoral. Love is the fulfillment of Law; therefore, power without love is immoral and lawless.

-Power without Love is godless. God is love; therefore, power without love is godless.

-Power without Love cannot work the righteousness of God.

Jesus was moved with compassion and healed people. Love is the more excellent way. It is the

way that remains. Love is the greatest of all.

Be rooted in the love of Christ and your life will bear fruit for Christ.

We all can have the gifts of the Spirit if we are zealous for them and if we cherish the love of Christ in our hearts for all.

GOD OF ORDER AND PEACE

"The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace." (1Co 14:32-33 NIV)

One certain characteristic of God's work is order and peace. Wherever God is at work, we are certain to see order and propriety.

A look into the Creation account will tell us that God works in an orderly fashion. A look into God's instructions regarding the construction of the Tabernacle of Wilderness tells us that God is a God of order. A look into the life and ministry of Jesus tells us that He worked in an orderly fashion. The way He asked people to sit down while His disciples distributed food, the way in which He instructed what the healed were to do, the way in which it is testified that his clothes were folded into a corner when He rose from the dead are proof that He did what He said - He worked as He saw His Father work.

Therefore, any preacher who acts in a disorderly fashion and blames that on the Holy Spirit is guilty of blasphemy. A preacher who drags a meeting overtime and claims that he does that by the leading of the Spirit is guilty of both blasphemy and deception of people; unless, of course, the marks of the Spirit's leading are clear. A preacher who does "charismatic" things in a wild fashion may be following a heathen form of sensationalist religious ecstasy; but, anything unrestrained and peace-less is not from God. A person who claims that he had been in trance and not in control of himself was not filled nor led by the Spirit.

A sluggard who doesn't spend time in prayer nor study and then testifies that the Spirit helps him in his weakness (of lack of prayer and proper study) is a danger to the Church. He must be rebuked.

The Holy Spirit organizes and administers the works of ministry in the Church (1Cor.12:6). No man can attempt to organize and administer the Holy Spirit. No man can try to put God in a box. There are times when the Spirit may do something that seems irrational to the human mind (e.g. Jesus applying a mixture of mud and spit to the eyes of the blind man). However, the Spirit of God will not be inconsistent and confused in the work of ministry. The power of the Holy Spirit is not based on extreme and voluminous shouting; He works peacefully.

In the Corinthian Church's case, a number of people prophesying amounted to confusion and meaninglessness. No one understood nor profited from what they did. The Holy Spirit cannot be called the Master of such services where confusion and lack of peace is the result. Wherever He is there is peace; wherever He acts there is peace.

ANOINTING

To anoint means to, literally, smear or rub (usually with oil). With regard to spiritual authority and enablement for service, anointing is from God. Anointing consecrates and empowers a person called by God for the service of God. Anointing proceeds from the sovereign choice of God. He anoints the ones that He elects and calls. In the Old Testament, God would command people to go and anoint others; however, the real anointing was by Him (cf. Psalms 89:20-23). In the New Testament, however, ceremonial anointing with oil for ecclesiastical offices is no longer needed. The church can lay hands upon and separate apostles and elders for service under the direction of the Holy Spirit, but the real anointing is by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2,3; 14:23; 20:28). Laying of hands is not an empty ritual; it does impart the spiritual gift necessary for service (2Timothy 1:6).

Difference between Cleansing and Anointing

1. The blood was for cleansing of sins (Leviticus 4:25,26); anointing was for consecration to service (Exodus 30:30).
2. Cleansing with blood preceded anointing with oil for service (Leviticus 14:14,17).

Facts about Anointing

1. Anointing by God preceded the ceremonial act of anointing (Samuel had to recognize the one whom God had already anointed) (1Samuel 16:6)
2. Anointing was a one-time event (A person didn't need to be anointed again and again)
3. Anointing consecrated a person to God, but it didn't guarantee personal holiness (people like Saul and David did fall into sin again and again)
4. Failure to be faithful to God did not invalidate the anointing (1Samuel 24:6; Romans 11:29)
5. Failure to abide in God's salvation can lead to God's taking away the Holy Spirit (Psalms 51:11; 1Samuel 16:14)
6. The efficiency and power of the anointing comes from the presence of the Lord (Zechariah 4:12-14; Judges 16:20)

Anointing of Individuals for Service

1. Anointing of Priest (Exodus 30:30; 40:13-15)
2. Anointing of King (Psalms 89:20-23; 1Samuel 9:16; 1Kings 1:34)
3. Anointing of Prophet (1Kings 19:16)
4. Anointing of the Apostles (2Corinthians 1:21)

Anointing of Jesus (Isaiah 61:1; Acts 4:27)

1. Anointing with the oil of gladness (Psalms 45:7; Hebrews 1:9)
2. Anointing with the Holy Spirit and with Power (Acts 10:38)

Anointing of the Believer (1Peter 2:9)

The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1John 2:20, 27-29)

Anointing in the Secular

Cyrus was called God's anointed one (Isaiah 45:1). Secular authority is consecrated by God.

Other Usages:

Anointing for Healing

1. Anointing with clay (only done once by Jesus). (John 9:6)
2. Anointing with oil (Mark 6:13; James 5:14)

Anointing to Honor

Mary anoints Jesus (John 11:2)

LEADING OF THE SPIRIT

What does it mean to be "led," "moved," or "driven" by the Spirit of God? Is it something ineffable and very subjective like the experiences that yogis and Zen Buddhists talk about? In that case, it is not open to verification at all, and impossible to judge in any way, except investigation of the claims and results of such "leading". The Biblical criteria, however, is that (i) the leading must accord with the principles of scriptures (Deut.13:1-5) (ii) the leading must lead to the edification of the Church (1Cor.14:3) and (iii) the leading must bring glory to the Son (Jn.16:14).

Walking in the Spirit is not merely intellectual. The moment you're out of the light, it's all darkness, and you no longer know what you knew while in the light. But, when you're in the light all things are different

SLAYING IN THE SPIRIT

"Slaying in the Spirit" is becoming a very common phenomena with preachers becoming more tempted to post pictures or video clippings of people falling down while they minister. While it is important to note here that no human can put limits to the ways that the Holy Spirit will choose to manifest His power in services, it is equally also important to not attribute to the Spirit something that is not from Him. Certainly, what is not of Him is against Him. This is not to state that the phenomenon may not be from the Spirit. However, it is certainly a point of concern when this manifestation alone is highlighted as the charismatic one. Of course, in modern times other phenomena like laughter and vomiting have also been highlighted in some circles.

We can safely conclude on, at least ,the following:

1. It is not from the Spirit to highlight "Slaying in the Spirit" as the brand manifestation of the Spirit and His power. It is not biblically acceptable to capitalize on such phenomenon and make it appear as THE capital evidence of power.
2. However, one must be careful also not to oppose the phenomenon. Remember the Gamaliel principle: "If this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it-- lest you even be found to fight against God."(Act 5:38-39 NKJ)
3. It is fully important for all responsible Christians to evaluate the nature and fruits of any supernatural phenomenon (Deut.13:1,2,3; Matt.7:20,21,22,23; 1Thess.5:20,21), no matter how common it seems. This applies to also healing, miracles, and prophecy.
 - What is the doctrine being taught by the minister under whose ministry such signs appear?
 - How is the personal life and testimony of the minister?
 - What is the result of this supernatural experience in the life of the experiencer?
 - Does the nature of the experience comply with the nature of the Spirit? For instance, if it overpowers one's volitional faculties, then it may not be from the Spirit; because the Spirit's nature is to respect our freewill - He always says, "Let him who has ears listen to what the Spirit says" and the Lord doesn't break into someone's house; He stands at the door and knock.

4. Don't uphold signs and wonders; uphold the Word of God (Luke 10:17,18,19,20). No wonder is greater than the wonder of the Word; no working is greater than the penetrating work of the Word (Luke 16:31; Heb.4:12).

COSMOLOGY

God created the universe and all things in it in six days (Gen. 1,2; Ex. 20:11). The things that are now physically visible were made out of things unseen (Heb. 11:3); in other words, out of nothing. God did not create the world out of necessity but of His own free and sovereign will and for His pleasure (Rev. 4:11). Both darkness and light were created by God (Isa. 45:7; Gen. 1:3) - both are physical, the former an absence of the latter. God created space and time (Ps. 90:2 – 'or ever thou hadst formed {Heb. **Chul**- to rotate, spin} the earth and the world'). God created the universe for Jesus Christ, who is the heir of all things (Col. 1:16-18; Eph. 1:10).

ALIENS AND ETs

1. The Bible does speak of some extra-terrestrials; but, they are called angels and demons. Angels aren't some aliens inhabiting a distant planet called heaven, as Dake thought of it when he compiled the Dake's Bible. Angels are called ministering spirits (Heb.1:14).
2. The Bible also speaks of demonic signs and wonders in the last days meant to deceive humanity and work towards the rise of the antichrist (2Thess.2:9-11).
3. Whether the UFOs are real material objects, projected on the world screen to prepare the world for the antichrist, or they are mere demonic apparitions is not solved. Either way, they are not in favor of the Biblical God. The idea of "aliens watching us" is unbiblical.
4. UFO sightings have been undeniably confirmed by various sources. However, the Bible doesn't mention possible aliens from other planets.
5. Any sighting of an object has 4 possibilities:

- a. It has been made visible by God for a reason.
- b. It is a natural phenomenon.
- c. It is an angelic phenomenon.
- d. It has been made visible by humans.
- e. It is a demonic phenomenon.

If the devil can try to show to Jesus all the world in a moment, this next thing wouldn't be difficult for him at all.

However, not even SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) could solve the mystery of UFOs and aliens.

Belief in the possibility of intelligent life elsewhere (in aliens) and evolutionism have been going on together. The argument is that if life can evolve on earth then it can also evolve elsewhere in some other habitable planet. The Vatican's positive attitude towards the ETs may not be separated from its conceding to the evolutionary theory, even if it were theistic evolutionism.

Hal Lindsay and others have tried to show that UFOs are demonic appearances meant to deceive humans. There are some who connect these objects with conspiracy theories of secret government activities, possibly meant in preparation of the coming of the antichrist. The following few possible interpretations can be made of a particular ET sighting:

1. It might be an anomalous illusion created by the interplay of light rays in the sky. It is possible for someone or a group of people to observe such bright anomalies and consider them to be Unidentifiable Flying Objects.
2. It might just be another aircraft, balloon, or some such object that is being misidentified.
3. It might be a demonic delusive phenomenon.

It doesn't seem impossible for demonic apparitions to occur. The disciples mistook Jesus for a ghost when He came walking to them on the sea; which implied that they did believe that a group could see a ghost. After His resurrection, Jesus had to assure the disciples that He was not a ghost by asking them to examine Him physically; for, He said, a ghost doesn't have flesh and bones (Luke 24:39). In other words, a ghost might not have a physically tangible body and yet be visible. But, Jesus resurrected physically and was alive in body.

Angels, of course, have been regularly seen in the Bible.

There aren't any biblical possibilities, however, for a UFO to be a divine sign; unless, it is immediately accompanied by a divine explanation. God doesn't just show a sign without a verbal explanation of the same.

PROBLEM OF EVIL

1. The Problem of Evil is a problem that relates to Theology, Cosmology, Anthropology, Ethics & Politics, Soteriology, and Eschatology, chiefly; then, also to the other doctrines. Therefore, its solution is pivotal.
2. Any theology that claims to be systematic, but fails to address the Problem of Evil sufficiently is severely defective. It cannot be systematic; and if it is, its foundations are weak.
3. Any Systematic Theology that relegates the Problem of Evil to the realm of mysteries is a blank theology.
4. To unstrap the Problem of Evil is to touch the heart of reality; to feel the heartbeat of God.

THE QUESTIONS:

Why is there evil in the world? Why is there a world? Is there a history-healing solution for the problem of evil? because, if there is only a future solution, the past is left unameliorated.

FURTHER QUESTIONS:

The mother, with her four kids, looked at the SS man and asked, "See them, is it really possible that you are going to have such lovely kids killed?" He didn't answer. A few hours after this, the kids were gassed in Hitler's gas chambers.

If God governs the world, why does crime abound, why do accidents happen, and why is the world bereft of peace? If God does not govern the world, then is it free of His jurisdiction? If not, why doesn't He govern?

PROBINGS:

Gautama: The root of evil is *tanha*, desire. One experiences evil as long as one experiences attachment. The solution is enlightenment.

In effect, the problem is subjective (epistemic and moral) and not objective. No God or people are to blame for evil.

Upanisads: The root of evil is *maya*, the self-delusion of the Non-dual into differentiated reality. In reality, there is no evil; because there is neither subject nor media nor object, neither the experiencer nor the medium of experience nor the experienced. The solution is enlightenment.

In effect, the problem is subjective (epistemic) and not objective. No God or people are to blame for evil.

Mahavira: The root of evil is *karma*, the physical aggregations of worldly indulgence. The more one indulges in the world, the more *karma* he accumulates leading to bondage to the world and consequent cycle of birth and rebirth, *punarjanma*. Evil is *himsa*, violence, that brings bondage. The solution is *ahimsa* and meritorious works, *punya*.

In effect, the problem is subjective (epistemic and moral) primarily. No God is to blame for evil. However, people do cause evil and suffer the consequences of it in the next birth. But, one's salvation from evil is one's own responsibility. No one else is to blame, ultimately.

Augustine of Hippo: The cause of evil is two-fold: *natural evil* is caused by demons or fallen angels and *moral evil* is caused by sinful humans. The solution is eschatological: the Kingdom of Jesus Christ (grounded on the atoning work of Christ).

In effect, the problem is both subjective (moral) and objective (caused by others).

FURTHER PROBINGS:

The first three solutions apply to a universe where God does not exist, where that universe is eternal. Non-dualism is also a kind of atheism, in which the existence of an objective God is denied.

The fourth solution doesn't answer the question why God allows evil, apart from the proposition that God cannot obstruct free will. However, who is to blame if the policemen are required to allow crimes to take place, while they are present, in order to uphold the right to freedom (or free willing), in hope that justice will be meted out in the end?

SOLUTIONS:

The clue is from the Word.

1. This is not the best of all possible worlds.
2. If this is not the best of all possible worlds, this is not final.
3. If this is not final, this points to the final.
4. The final is the perfect.

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- 1 . If freedom of will can exist without freedom to evil in the New Creation, then freedom of will without freedom to evil is a possibility.
 2. If freedom of will without freedom to evil doesn't exist in this world, then this world is evil.
 3. If this world is evil, then it does not belong to God.
 4. If this world belonged to God and now does not belong to God, then He has abandoned it to destruction.
 5. If this world is abandoned to destruction, then this world is cureless.
 6. If this world is abandoned to destruction, then evil will escalate towards its end (by "evil" both moral and physical are meant).
 7. The world is evil escalating towards destruction.
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- 1 . If evil escalates, then evil hasn't reached finality.
 2. If evil escalates, then evil is not infinite.
 3. When evil reaches finality, it will destroy itself (A fully rotten apple is self-destroyed).
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- 1 . If evil is discerned, then moral freedom exists. For, only sentient, moral beings can discern the difference between good and evil (moral knowledge exists).
 2. If moral freedom exists, then moral retribution exists.
 3. If moral retribution exists, then the moral law exists.
 4. If the moral law exists, then the moral law-giver exists.
 5. If the moral law-giver exists, then He must be good and all-powerful. For, if not so His law would be evil and He would be incapable of executing the Law.
 6. The moral law-giver must be God.
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- 1 . If God is good and all-powerful, then He would save the evil world.
 2. If the world is evil, then it will die.
 3. If the world is bound to die, then it can only be saved through resurrection.
 4. If the world is to be saved through resurrection, then it must have the cause of resurrection.
 5. Only God can be the cause of resurrection.
 6. Therefore, the salvation of the world consists in God becoming the cause of resurrection within the world.
 7. In the Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection of Christ, God became the cause of resurrection within the world for those who accept the cause (Spirit of resurrection) while alive on earth.
 8. Thus, only those who accept the cause while living can experience the resurrection from the dead and the justification of Jesus Christ.
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THEOLOGIES OF HISTORY

Theologies of history have, at least, two functions:

1. They provide a thematic layout of general history.
2. They provide an interpretive framework for specific events in history.

We term them "theologies" because there are a number of various theological approaches to history. Examples are Augustine's Two City Theology and Dispensationalism.

Some Terminological Clarifications

Vs. Historical Theology

Theology of history is, of course, certainly not historical theology; that may not need to be mentioned, except for clarification of terminologies. Historical theology is the name of a discipline that studies the historical development of theology. On the contrary, theology of history theologically approaches history with theories and interpretations. For example, historical theology studies issues like how the doctrine of Trinity developed in history. Theology of history, on the other hand, addresses issues like what the Bible says about why postmodernism came to be or whether wars are going to cease.

Vs. Philosophy of History

A further distinction needs to be made between theology of history and philosophy of history.

While a theology of history approaches history from the vantage point of the Bible; however, philosophy of history (e.g. the dialectical theory of Hegel or Marxist philosophy of history) approaches history from the perspective of a philosophical tradition. A philosophical bias towards history, for instance in the secular humanist approach to history, will usually demythologize ancient historical accounts recorded from a theological perspective.

Vs. Non-Biblical Theology

There are also non-biblical theologies of history like, for instance, the *Cyclical Theory of History* and the *Theory of the Four Yugas*. The beginning points of these theologies are in non-biblical sources. They fall under “theology” since the sources are claimed to have a sacred origin.

Vs. Prophecy

While prophecy relates to the future, theology of history encompasses the entire time-spectrum and also provides the framework for the interpretation of prophecy (but not without the hermeneutical circle—the reading of prophecy does also influence the development of a theology of history, provided the view and approach towards biblical interpretation – e.g. literal or allegorical).

Relationship with Cosmology, Soteriology, and Eschatology

Theology of history certainly involves discussions of cosmology, soteriology, and eschatology; however, these are viewed as parts of its own grand story. These narratives are parts of the metanarrative, which is meta not only in the sense of being the bigger story, but also in the sense of providing the theological vantage point from which these events derive theological significance.

Important Characteristics of Theologies of History

A few important characteristics of theologies of history may be pointed out as follows:

1. *They are normative, not descriptive.* Theologies of history prescribe the blueprint for an understanding of history.
2. *They are interpretive.* Theologies of history attempt to theologically interpret general and specific events in history in light of the theological metanarrative.

Few Theologies of History

1. Augustine's *The City of God*. Rome was sacked in 410 by the Visigoths who inflicted on it barbaric destruction. In the aftermath, critics assailed Christianity for being the reason of Rome's fall. One challenge of history that Christianity faced was, “How could Rome as strong as it was crumble down after turning to Christianity?” Augustine wrote *The City of God* in response to this question. His theology of history was actually an apologetic that provided a theological framework for an understanding of the Sack of Rome in light of God's metanarrative of history. To Augustine, there are ultimately only two cities: the City of the World and the City of God. The book is, in essence, a commentary on history from the vantage point of this view of the two cities and the conflict between them.

2. Dispensationalism. Dispensationalism was systematized by John Darby (1800-82) and was popularized by C.I. Scofield through his *Scofield Reference Bible*. Dispensationalism divides the history of the world into various ages which provides also a hermeneutic normative for interpretation of Biblical history and God's dealings with the nations. Some dispensationalists consider the ages to only be three (Law, Grace, and Kingdom), while others opt for four, seven, or more (e.g. Innocence, Conscience, Human Government, Law, Grace...). Further, there are

also differences with regard to the division a particular age; for instance, whether the tribulation would follow or precede the rapture. Dispensationalists theology of history also tries to identify the present status of Israel and the nations in the plan of God.

3. Dominionism. Dominion theology or dominionism has variants in movements such as Christian Reconstructionism and the Kingdom Now theology and looks to the triumph of Christ on the Cross over principalities and powers as the ground for Christian dominionism. While there are disagreements between various theological perspectives in this camp, there is a general agreement on postmillennialism (that the reign of Christ began with Christ's triumph on the Cross). The view, thus, prescribes Christians to become actively involved in politics, arts, education, and economics, in order to transform history.

Any reading of the Scriptures will need a theology of history to relate the events to each other. A theology of history becomes necessary not only for an understanding of God's dealings with humans at different times, but also in order to understand, for instance, why a particular divine commandment is not binding at other times. Thus, theology of history also sheds light on biblical politics and ethics. More significantly, it helps us in the understanding of contemporary history and its trends and in being able to predict where all this is leading towards.

SECULAR POLITICS AND GOD

Francis Schaeffer had geniously pointed out the problems with compartmentalizing theology. He observed that Thomas Aquinas' division of theology into natural and revelational was what propelled a history that ended up in the secularization of theology: the lower story (nature) ate up the upper story (grace). The basic problem was the failure to establish a proper connection between the lower and the upper story. He talked of the division as a house made up of the lower and upper story, but having no connecting stairs. The problem seems similar to Plato's division of the reality into ideas and instances; but, there doesn't seem to be a stair between them.

Contrary to such compartmentalization, the Bible tells us about Jacob (the Patriarch Israel) who dreamt at Bethel that a stair connected earth to heaven and the angels of God ascended and descended to it. The vision speaks volumes; but one fact is that God is not just a disconnected transcendent; He is connected to this world. The universe is not a closed system; God does interfere with human history; He is sovereign over it.

However, when we speak about God in the secular, we do not disconnect Him from the God of the universal Church. There is one God, God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Further, the separation of Church and State is not compartmentalization of authority. God's authority is singular. His Lordship is universal. The compartmentalization is with regard to the Church - "What is Caesar's must be rendered to Caesar and what is God's must be rendered to God" when it comes to matters of religion versus politics. In other words, the Church is the House of God; the secular world is not. God's presence in the world is redemptive and reconciliatory. His Spirit is what prevents the mystery of iniquity from overtaking history (2Thess.2). Hell will break loose on earth the moment the Spirit is taken out of the path. God's presence through the Spirit is to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). Interestingly, it is in the political arena (of civilian concerns regarding law, justice, and peace) that these concepts gain distinct relevance. The Law is both social and personal. And, the Law is written in human hearts on tablets of flesh (Rom.2:15). However, political authority is based on a different covenant,

which is prior to both Israel and the Church.

It is based on God's Covenant with Noah after the Flood. There He established violence and terror as the tools of human government to execute temporal justice on earth. In fact, "fear" had to become an important factor in the survival of humans. Thus, even the animal world was brought under the purview of fear.

"The fear and dread of you will fall upon all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air, upon every creature that moves along the ground, and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hands." (Genesis 9:2)

Then, with regard to human government, he declares:

"Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man." (Gen.9:6)

Of course, the promise of the Covenant is that God will never destroy humanity by means of a global flood, as He had done in Noah's time; and the Rainbow was given as the sign of the Covenant with the nations.

The authority of the Church, however, is not physical. It is spiritual; the tools are also spiritual.

"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete" (2 Cor.5:2-6)

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." (Eph.6:12)

While fear is the element of crime-prevention in the political world, love is the binding element of the community of believers in Christ.

"For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer." (Rom.13:3-4)

"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:35)

Perhaps, we can say that political authority reflects the judicial face of God while ecclesiastical authority reflects divine mercy and love. Significantly, it was the religious powers of Jesus' day, deprived of political power, who used the secular political authority of the Romans (who wished not to meddle with religious matters) to crucify Jesus. The Bible tells us that in Jesus Justice and Love kissed each other. The Bible does point to a future time when the kingdom of the world will become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ, and He will reign for ever and ever (Rev.6:15). It also talks about the saints who will reign with Him and judge the angels. But, as long as the kingdom of the world remains (secular politics), the world is still under the Noahic Covenant. It may accept or reject God, but the authority is still sacred; its violation certainly gets historically punished (through sword (war), famine (economic collapse), or pestilence

(diseases)). We cannot bypass the Covenants by which God deals with humanity if we desire to understand history from a Biblical perspective.

ANGELOLOGY

Angels are immortal and celestial beings created by God (Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9; Col. 2:18; Lk. 20:34-36). They are called “ministering spirits” (Heb. 1:14). They are sexless and numerous (Lk. 20:34-35; Dan. 7:10; Heb. 12:22). There are various kinds of angels. The Cherubim are appointed in the Garden and in presence of God (Gen. 3:24; Ex. 25:22; Eze. 28:13,14). The Seraphim (or “the burning ones”) are seen as worshipping God in Isaiah 6:2,3. There are two Archangels, Michael, the captain of Warring Angels (Jude 1:9; Rev. 12:7) and Gabriel, the Messenger of God (Lk. 1:19; Dan. 8:16; 9:21). The angels are also known as “the elect angels” because of their position in the presence of God (1Tim. 5:21). They were those who remained faithful to God during the rebellion of Satan (who was an anointed cherub before his fall).

Angels possess wisdom (2Sam. 14:17; 1 Pet. 1:12), follow the orders of God (Psalm 103:20), stand before God in reverential worship (Neh. 9:6; Heb. 1:6), are meek (2Pet. 2:11), mighty (Ps. 103:20), and holy (Rev. 14:10). They are God’s servants and minister only according to the commandment of God (Heb. 1:14; Ps. 103:20). Humans are forbidden to venerate or worship angels (Col.2:8; Rev.22:8,9).

CAN ANGELS APPEAR IN VARIOUS FORMS?

Theories

- 1. Simulation.** The angels take form and when doing so reproduce the exact form and characteristics of the species or kind or personality in which they appear. (Pagan view explicit in mythology of gods assuming animal and human form.)
- 2. Restriction.** The angels assume different forms but are untouched by the natures and characteristics of these forms. (Still doesn't answer why such forms are to be taken then, unless meant for some kind of deceptive or clandestine purposes.)
- 3. Negation.** Angels do not assume other forms (but appear as they are in different dimensions of glory).

(a) Essence defines identity; therefore, essence (essential nature) cannot change without affecting identity. That means that **the angel who simulates no longer remains an angel** (at least for the said amount of time) thus producing confusion in the order of creation. God’s creation follows a set order. Why don’t angels appear as females?

(b) Since angels are God’s servants and **God doesn’t employ deceptive means; neither is He short of instruments**; therefore, angels cannot assume forms other than their own. For instance, when God needed a fish, He used a fish and didn’t transform an angel into a fish.

(c) There isn’t any biblical warrant for the view that angels take form. The angels are always seen as appearing in form of a male (but glorious being), except in visions.

(d) Any present supernatural occurrences involving mysterious men, voices etc are simply miraculous and so unexplainable. However, one must note that God can appear in various forms (fire¹, pillar, cloud, man). But in cases where simulation of existent or deceased persons is involved, they should not be attributed to God. Either they are simply miraculous or in some specific instances (such as appearance of Samuel or Moses) they *may be* appearances of the spirit, however, never without the permission and direction of God. However, since Scripture doesn’t give proofs of such occurrences as common to the children of God and is definitely against divination, such occurrences must no longer be expected. (Even Lazarus was not sent back in answer to the rich man). Therefore, **they must be considered as simply miraculous**

visions if bearing divine affirmation of the Holy Spirit as in the case of the Macedonian Call and they are always recognized as so later on.

P.S. Demons are deceptive and "assume" forms by means of mental manipulations to deceive humans away from the true worship of God. Therefore, the only source of our knowledge of supernatural reality is the Word of God. If the Bible is silent on any topic, that topic is dispensable.

P.S.2. All appearances of deceased spirits at present are to be considered as demonic.

NOTE

¹ Not as fire but *in* fire... Like a dove, *gentle*. Fire (Acts 2).. power.

DEMONOLOGY

Demons are those angels who rebelled against God along with Lucifer who is also known as Satan (meaning "adversary"), the old serpent, tempter, the wicked one, ruler of this world, god of this age, murderer and father of lies (Isa. 14:12-15; Eze. 28:12-19; Jn. 12:31; 2Cor. 4:4; Matt. 4:3; 1Jn. 5:19; Jn. 8:44). Therefore, these demons are also referred to as "angels that kept not their first estate" (Jude 6); they are the fallen angels. They oppose God's work (1Thess. 2:18), deceive the nations (Rev. 20:7-8), are proud (1Tim. 3:6), influencers of godlessness (Eph. 2:2), cruel (1Pet. 5:8), malignant (Job 2:4), and oppressors of mankind with various maladies and sicknesses (Acts 10:38; Mark 9:25). They possess the bodies of unbelievers (Matt. 8:16), can enter into a person (Lk. 22:3), can influence a person's thinking (Acts 5:3), and can even possess the bodies of animals (Lk. 8:33).

A believer can never be demon-possessed since his body is a temple of the Holy Spirit and has no room for demons (1Cor.6:19; 1Cor.10:21).

The demons believe and tremble before God (James 2:19). Satan and his demonic angels await the judgment of God (Matt. 8:29; Rev. 20:10). The believers in Jesus Christ are called to submit to God and resist the devil (James 4:7). One sign of believers is that they shall cast out demons (Mk. 16:17).

AUTHORITY OF THE DEVIL

The devil has also some authority (*exousia*) in this world (Acts 26:18). There are authorities and rulers of darkness in the heavenly places (Eph.6:12), against whom the Church is engaged in a battle. The authority of the devil is called "power of darkness" (Col.1:13).

These evil authorities have been disarmed by Jesus; so, they have no power over the church. (Col.2:15; Matt.16:18). The child of God is delivered from the authority of the devil and from the kingdom of darkness and is transferred to the Kingdom of Jesus Christ (Acts 26:18; Col.1:13). He is a citizen of heaven and is protected by the forces of heaven (Phil.3:20; Psalms 91:11; Hebrews 1:14). The devil has no authority over the believer (1John 5:18).

However, the world still lies under the wicked one (1John 5:19)

The devil is called the Prince of the power (*exousia*) of the air, the spirit that now works among the disobedient (Eph.2:2; Job 2:2)

He is called the god of this world or age (2Cor.4:4)

His workings are known as the mystery of iniquity (2Thess.2:7)

The devil will give great power and authority to the Anti-Christ during the 7-year Great Tribulation (Rev.13:2) (He tried to approach Jesus too, but failed (Luke 4:6,7).

But, Jesus will bring the devil and his powers to an end (Rev.17:13,14; 19:20; 20:10).

Sometimes, God allows the devil to oppress His servants; but, God controls the whole event and protects His servants (Job 2:6; 2Cor.12:7; 1John 5:18; 1Pet.1:5; 5:8,9; James 4:7)

EXPELLING DEMONS

- A believer has Christ-given authority to cast out demons (Matt. 10:1,8; Mk. 16:17). The source of this power is Christ alone.
- Christ cast them out by the Spirit of God (Mt.12:28); therefore, a believer should have a Spirit-filled walk (Gal.5:25).

- Prayer, fasting and total submission to God is important (Mk. 9:29; James 4:7).
- The believer should seek the gift of discerning the spirits (1Cor. 12:10).
- He should not talk with demons, as a general rule (Mk. 1:24). They are deceivers.
- The believer should cast them out in the Name of Jesus (Acts 16:18).
- Do not close your eyes when casting out demons: you are commanding, not praying; demons are sometimes seen to be physically violent (Matt.17:15; Acts.19:15,16).
- The believer should not allow the demon to weaken his/her faith in God, His Word, and the power of Christ's Holy Spirit. One of devil's weapons is doubt (Gen. 3:1; Matt.4:3-10).
- In every deliverance session, there must be order and discipline among the servants of God; let one minister in authority while the rest back him/her in prayer (1Cor.14:33).
- All amulets, charms, fetishes, and occultic objects must be removed before any deliverance can take place. The possession of such things provide strongholds for demonic oppression. (Acts 19:19).
- The delivered must be guided into confession, repentance, belief, and the infilling of the Holy Spirit to avoid serious consequences of demonic return (Matt. 12:44,45). A life of holiness and keeping in the will of God is imperative (1Jn. 5:18).

ANTHROPOLOGY

God created man on the sixth day as male and female made in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26-28). They reflected the honor and glory of God and were given dominion over all creation (Ps. 8:5; Gen. 1:28).

CREATION OF MAN

God created man as a physical, personal, and spiritual being; thus, man is body, soul, and spirit (Gen.2:7; Job 32:8; Eccl. 11:5; 12:7; 1Thess. 5:23).

WHAT IS LIFE?

1. Life is a Gift

It is a gift of God.

What we do with a gift shows how much we regard the Giver. Some keep old letters as a treasure, because it was written by a special one whom they love. Some treasure autographs. God has given us the gift of life. Let's live it in honor of Him. Never despise any fellow being or life-form, for God has created them all. Jesus said if we call our brother a fool or Raca, we will be in danger of hell fire. Never forget that all life is a gift from God and must be received as such.

2. Life is a Mission

We are not here just out of nowhere, thrown in, without any purpose, meaning, or destiny. God has created us with a purpose, and this life is all about fulfilling that purpose, to know Him and glorify Him. We must not look at life as complete and rounded in itself. It is not the end, but only a means for the fulfillment of a mission, which is the Kingdom of God in our lives. Are we living with God's mission mandate in perspective and with eternity in mind? Let's follow our Shepherd and not the world in knowing what to do and where to go in this world we live in.

3. Life is an Opportunity

There is only this one life given to us, and it is the only opportunity for us to do what can be done before the Judgment. The Bible commands us to make the best use of every moment. "Redeem the time," it says "for the days are evil". Do we buy each opportunity in order to do good and glorify the Name of our Lord? If not, it is the right time to repent and surrender ourselves into God's hand, so that our times will really be in His hand and life will be fully lived only for Him, for Whom all things are made.

THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN SCRIPTURE

Nothing is more harmful than the doubt that the Bible is governed by prejudice. The reason should be clear: doubts about the Bible being prejudiced are bred in a mind that has begun to question the infallibility of Scriptures; but, truth and prejudice cannot stand together.

Now, there are some who would say that it is impossible to be unbiased at all; everybody brings some kind of pre-judgment (pre-judice), pre-understanding to a text or event. What we already have believed in determines how we interpret anything else. Thus, women in some cultures would find biblical texts regarding head-covering as axiomatic, while women in other cultures might find them very oppressive. The very fact that there are a number of interpretations (some in defense of affirming that the rule is mandatory; others in defense affirming that the rule is mandatory only in few cultures; some others doubting that the commandment is prejudiced) tells

us that pre-understanding has a great bearing upon one's interpretation of a text. However, with regard to those who seriously take Scripture for what it is, the hermeneutical circle (the circle of interpretation) cannot be ignored: one's prejudgment brought to the text can be radically altered through engagement with the text; in other words, a person's biases can be severely challenged and changed as he continues to explore God's word, giving rise to a new understanding that is once again brought into fresh engagement with the text once again.

Accusations about the Bible being prejudiced against women is often brought forth by some feminists who doubt that the Bible can be fair with women especially when its overarching culture is patriarchal (as they believe it to be). For such, anything patriarchal is prone to be biased against women. But, that is a prejudiced belief itself. Further, it can be unhealthy to label something (a generation, a culture) as patriarchal and use that caricature to condemn it. On the other hand, some might say "No, the Bible is not biased, but interpretations of it are." This could be possible, where scripture twisting occurs to manipulate interpretation in order to use scriptural authority to validate a man-made rule. However, what the Bible says in this regard might be very different from what people usually think it says. Is the Bible biased against women? The question has many issues at bottom; however, in this article, we'll examine only a few Biblical passages that have been more often challenged than others.

The Image of God in Woman

We start at the first record of woman in the Bible. In Genesis 1:27, she is not referred to as "woman" yet, but only as "female". The passage says: "God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." (Gen 1:27) With regard to the image of God, neither the male nor the female are inferior or superior to each other. Note the singular and the plural in the passage: "in the image of God He created HIM; male and female He created THEM" (emphatics mine). Man, here in this passage, is not merely Adam; man here is humanity (both male and female).

Headship and Authority

In chapter 2 of Genesis, we find for the first time the expression "woman"; and, in a way it is "patriarchal" because it was not God who called the female as woman, it was the man who called her so (2:23). The expression "woman" in verse 22 is based on the name that the man gave her. But, what did God call her? We don't find Him call her by any name except that He said that He wanted to make for the man "a helper comparable to him". Adam's naming the woman as Woman (as "one taken out of Man") was only an act that acknowledged that God had given him a "helper comparable to him", bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh. However, the Genesis narrative in chapter 2 is rudimentary, relating only to the first man and his wife. But, womanhood is not just about "wifeness"; a woman is also sister, a mother, a daughter – and those relationships are diametrically different from the one spoken of in Genesis 2:24: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." (Gen 2:24). The passage has been talking about the man and his wife, predominantly. But, the basic premise is clear: humans have been created as male and female in the image and likeness of God.

In 1Corinthians Paul looks back at Genesis for answers to some contemporary problems. He notes:

"For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man." (1Co 11:7-9)

This doesn't mean that the woman is not created in the image of God; we have already looked at that earlier. Paul only wants to point out the order of succession here: the man was made first, then the woman for the man.

Prior to this, Paul had stated, ***“the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.”*** (1Co 11:3)

Certainly, this doesn't mean that every male on earth is the head of every female on earth nor that every female on earth has to submit to every male on earth. Very clearly, the head of a woman is only her husband. As a daughter, she submits to her father even as a son is commanded to obey his father and his mother; however, with regard to headship, the Bible states it clearly that the woman (i.e. the wife) was created for the man. But, in other relationships, the Genesis rule doesn't apply. And so, Paul continues,

“Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God.” (1Co 11:11-12)

Certainly, from passages where it says that the son should obey the voice of his mother, we don't extrapolate that the Bible is matriarchal and oppressive against men. It is ridiculous to point out that in the order of authority the authority of a son is above his mother (or a female tutor at school) just because of his gender. The Bible makes it very clear that a son has to honor his mother and must not forsake her law (Prov.1:8). However, when the children are grown up, they are free from any tutorship that toddlers must have (Gal.4:1-2,5; 1Kgs.15:13). Mary could not have authority over her son after He was grown up (Matt.12:47-50). However, children are commanded to render to their parents what is due to them (1Tim.5:4,8).

The Biblical principle places the man as the caretaker and protector of his wife, as being the stronger one in relation to his wife who is “the weaker vessel” (1Peter 3:7). No husband ought to treat his wife dishonorably; if he does that it will invite wrath from God (1Peter 3:7). Also, the Bible makes it clear that God is against unethical divorces (Mal.2:16; Matt.19:3-9) and the Law of Moses made it sure that a woman was always treated with honor (Deut.21:10-17; 22:13-19) and that the man brought happiness to his wife (Deut.24:5). There were also laws for the protection of slaves, widows, and pregnant women.

Regarding Public Silence

In 1Corinthians 14:34-35, Paul instructs:

Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church. (1Co 14:34-35)

By “church” here is meant a gathering of Christians at a place. One important rule of biblical interpretation is the consistency principle: we must assume that the author is being consistent throughout his writing unless the inconsistency is blatant. The purpose of this rule is to prevent skepticism from making premature surface interpretations without having looked deeply into the context of a text and the variable meanings of the terms used in it.

It is very clear from this very epistle that Paul doesn't imply that women have to be absolutely silent in the churches. A woman could certainly pray and prophesy in the public (1Cor.11:5),

which meant a lot; because prayer involved a priestly representative role and prophesying involved authoritative communication of divine oracles – **“There is neither...male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”** (Gal 3:28). Paul is certainly looking at order. He had been speaking of how prophets have to prophesy in an orderly manner, while the others judged. Obviously, then, Paul is not saying here that only men should prophesy and women must not prophesy but be silent. That being ruled out, the possibility remains that he is forbidding disorderly chattering in the church while a service is going on.

In 1Timothy 2:12, however, Paul instructs Timothy that a woman is not permitted to teach or to have authority over a man. The context here points to a family couple (“a woman” and “a man”) and the rationale is given from the Genesis story of the first Man and his Wife. In a husband-wife relationship, a woman is not permitted to have authority over or try to dominate her husband. Peter amplifies it further when he instructs: **“Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, (1Pe 3:1).** However, this doesn’t mean that a woman cannot teach at all. Writing to Timothy again, he reminds him of the faith of Timothy’s mother and his grandmother, and of how from his childhood he was instructed in the Scriptures – certainly, by his mother and grandmother because Timothy’s father was not a Jew (2Tim.1:5; 3:15; Acts 16:1).

This also implies that a woman can be a pastor in a church if her husband is a pastor. However, if her husband is not a pastor, then her appointment as a shepherd of the flock can assume her being in an authoritative position above her husband in the church, which would immediately convey role confusion with respect to the Genesis principle; therefore the injunction that a woman should not have authority over a man.

In cases that a couple stands as a model and example for other families (especially with regard to their public life), even secular authority recognizes the importance of the Genesis model (Esther 1:16-18). The Christian view of this model is given in Ephesians 5: 22-33. However, in cases that the authoritative position doesn’t have a family-extrapolation (e.g. modern business and politics – in which family life is individualist and private) a woman can be in authoritative position above men.

MARRIAGE

1. Marriage is a COVENANT of Love.

Marriage is a Covenant, not a contract... Contract of love is impossible for love is not a commercial property. When you make love a conditional property, it becomes harlotry. You fix a price. It is sin. You cannot make an agreement to love each other for a period of time or on some conditions. Love is not subject to any contract. Love is the fruit of the Spirit (not work of the flesh).

Marital love is not a contract. It is a covenant. Because love is sacred. The Bible says God is Love.

God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. (1Jo 4:16 NKJ)

2. Marriage is a UNION of two bodies

When God brought Eve before Adam, he called her the flesh of his flesh and the bone of his bones.

The First Marital Declaration:

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Gen 2:24 NKJ)

"So, husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it." (Eph 5:28-29 NKJ)

The Bible never says that the woman is joined to the man. It says the man is joined to the woman. And, this joining is effected by a man leaving his parents; which is essential, because now he has a family of his own and he has become the head.

But, the head of the man is Christ. A man is incomplete as long as Christ is not his head. A man who tries to derive his strength from a woman will fail to provide leadership in his family. The man must derive his strength from his Head, Christ. In Him we are complete. Similarly, a woman who looks to derive her strength from her husband will fail to be a good wife, for she will fall with her husband when he falls like it happened with Adam and Eve; but, when she derives her strength from Christ, she becomes a good help meet. In all relationships, Christ comes in between. He is the Mediator. He is the Master. He is the Head. Christ is Head of both the man and the woman.

But, a man is not head of a family unless he is married to a wife. And so, the institution of marriage is given for the propagation of the human family as a social unit. God joins the two and makes them one because he seeks godly offspring (Mal.2:15).

"Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth." (Mal 2:15 NIV)

Now, a head is made for only one body. The husband is the head of his wife. The mother-in-law is not the head of the daughter-in-law and the father-in-law is not the head of the daughter-in-law. Of course, the woman also leaves. But, her leaving is not mentioned because in the event of leaving, the leading role belongs to the husband. And the leaving of the man doesn't mean that he forsakes his parents; but, it means that he assumes the role of a head separate from them. 1Timothy 5:8: If anyone doesn't provide for his own (parents esp), he is worse than an unbeliever.

3. Marriage is a TYPE of the Relation between Christ and the Church

Type- Foreshadow. The Reality is the Eternal. Marriage is Temporal (Not temporary). Jesus said that in the resurrection there won't be marriages. But, there is that eternal relationship between Christ the Bride and His Body, the Church.

For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones (Eph 5:30 NKJ)

Eph.5:22-33

Christ is Head – Husband is Head

Church is subject – Wives must submit in all things

Christ loved the Church and gave Himself – Husbands must so love their wives

CLOTHING AND CULTURE

Clothing and culture are closely knit together. Often, clothing is identified with culture. However, in modern times, people in most parts of the world are embracing a plurality of inter-cultural dress culture. The dominating influence is Western. People of some cultures have protested against the new dress forms (imported or innovated) as threatening the indigenous forms. Much can be written on the variety of issues that concern the dress ethic and theology. However, that is not the goal here.

One can take any of the many approaches to understand the origin, nature, function, and end of clothing. For instance, one can take the historical approach and study the origin and evolution of one or many dress forms; similarly, one can take the psychological approach and study human behavior and attitudes towards clothing from childhood to old age. Likewise, one can also take the religious approach and see what religion has to say about clothing with regard to sin, purity, ritual, and salvation, and religions have lot to say of this. A Christian theological approach would attempt to understand not only the historical dimension of clothing, but also its ethical and eschatological dimensions.

One important thing to note is that the Bible doesn't lament a culture if that culture properly functions to safeguard the Christian virtues. However, it does oppose any culture that turns the natural into unnatural, that promotes a false sense of shame and honor and despises what God has divinely instituted in nature. Therefore, whenever a clothing or even hair style is culturally distinguished as masculine or feminine, violation of the same within that culture is considered unnatural by God – not because a dress form is absolutely masculine or feminine, but because the dress form in the language of the particular culture means either masculine or feminine (Deut.22:5; 1Cor.11:14). Therefore, violation of the dress form becomes a violation of nature itself in the same manner that one cannot violate grammar of a particular language and still make sense in that language. The argument that the violation doesn't exist in another language will not apply in this particular language.

Purposes of Clothing

1. To cover nakedness, not expose it (Gen.3:21)
2. To protect shame, not promote shamelessness (Gen.3:7,21)
3. To honor, not rebel (not rebellious dress forms, not for attracting through shock or provocation) (e.g. dress to honor various occasions like wedding. Jesus mentioned in his parable of the rich man's banquet that the man who didn't wear the wedding garment was thrown out, because he didn't honor the occasion, Matt.22:11; Gen.24:65)
4. To aid the body, not violate it (There are different clothing for different seasons - winter, summer, rainy; different clothing for different purposes: to protect against sun or wind or rain - hats, headgears, etc, 2Tim.4:13,21)
5. To celebrate fidelity, not become feast to the eyes of everyone (Sol.4:12).

6. To display modesty and humility, not trot out arrogance and pride (Isaiah 3:17-23; 1Pet.3:3,4)
7. To focus on inner beauty, not distract with or compensate with outer one (1Pet.3:3,4; Prov.31:30; Jer.2:33; 2Kings 9:30)

SIN

Sin can only be sin if it has an eternal dimension. Sin can only have an eternal dimension if there are eternal beings. Sin can be said to have an eternal dimension only if there is an eternal order that it violates so as to have eternal repercussions. In this sense, then, sin is the violation of an eternal order. 'Where there is no law, there is no transgression.'

Sin exists as a disruptive factor among eternal beings. The eternal order is founded upon the nature of the Source (of all being): God the eternal Spirit. Consequentially, the eternal order is an order of love. Truth is the consistent characteristic of this eternal order; therefore, justice is the necessary antidote to the violation of the order.

Therefore, sin is essentially the distortion of love and truth with eternal repercussions. In other words, it is a violation of the eternal order (definitive) of love and truth. A violation of the eternal order is directed against the Source & Ground of the eternal order – God. In this sense, then, sin is primarily always sin against God and then sin against others. Thus, sin cannot be defined in terms of temporal comfort and consent. In other words, no individual or group of people by reference to present comfort and mutual consent can redefine what sin is and what sin is not. Sin is never merely temporal; it is cosmic.

The moral law is written in heart of every man (Ro. 2: 15). The moral law is grounded in the moral nature of God. The moral law is absolute, since it is grounded in God.

The first human sin was the violation of the divine command against eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This act of disobedience is referred to as 'transgression' (Gk. *Parabasis*, violation, breach, breaking of law). The eating of the fruit is transgression since it violates the word of God; and since the word of God is the order of the universe, the act of willful disobedience is sin. The sin was primarily against God. It was sin in relation to God, for it involved a rejection of divine authority, disobedience of His command, and association with God's antagonist. The immediate result was mortality.

The first man Adam sinned and through this brought sin and death into the world (Rom. 5:12). The Bible says that in Adam all sinned, therefore death passed on to all men (Rom. 5:12). This death was three-fold in nature: spiritual death (separation from and enmity with God), physical death (separation of spirit from the body), and second death (punishment in hell) (Eph. 2:1; Col. 1:21; Rom. 5:10; Rev. 21:8). Man became mortal through the condemnation of sin.

The Bible says that "flesh and blood" or unregenerate humans "cannot inherit the kingdom of God" since corruption cannot inherit incorruption (1Cor. 15:50). Therefore, the only way of salvation is through regeneration by the Spirit through faith (Jn. 3:5,6). When one accepts the Lordship of Jesus Christ, one passes from the condemnation of the old creation and becomes heir of God's coming kingdom through the Lord Jesus Christ. The others are subject to the god of this world who is the devil (2Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; 1Jn. 5:19).

SINFUL NATURE

Nature' here must not be understood as similar to that in 'human nature' or 'feline nature'. It is the principle of sin, which Romans 7 talks about, the law of sin. In essence, it is selfishness, covetousness, the end by which 'good' or 'evil' is defined. When Adam sinned, the choice broke him off from the Life of God and mankind became autonomous. Man could decide what was right or wrong by reference to himself. [Even philosophers have referred to happiness as the desired end]. That is the principle of lawlessness that is internal, intense, and universal. Therefore, the condemnation hangs over the head. Man is not compelled by the sin principle, he chooses to walk according to it in his condemned state of separation from God, in his state of Spiritless carnality, and thus subservience and enslavement to sin. He is now flesh (in the sense of not having the dominance of the law of the Spirit, Rom 8:2) and walks according to the flesh in a world that is Godless and self-serving.

SOTERIOLOGY

The Gospel or Good news proclaims that all humans can be saved from their sins by faith in Jesus Christ. God sent Jesus Christ His Son into this world to be the sacrificial Lamb of God that would atone for the sins of the world (Jn. 1:29). The body of Jesus Christ was a sacrificial body anointed and separated by the Holy Spirit (Lk. 1:35; Heb. 10:5). The Holy Spirit revealed the sufferings of Jesus Christ, which He was to suffer for our sins, to the prophets of old (1Pet.1:10,11). Christ became the Mediator between man and God through His incarnation and atoning death; thus, through the sacrifice of His body by the Eternal Spirit (Heb. 9:14) He opened a way for us into God's presence (Heb. 10:19,20). Through His atoning death and resurrection Jesus Christ has become the path of reconciliation between God and man (Rom. 5:10; Heb. 1:3).

Those who reject this offer of salvation will remain in their condemnation and will "be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2Thess. 1:9). Those who accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior are delivered from the power of darkness into the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ (Col. 1:13). They are given the right to sonship and are co-heirs with Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:12; Rom. 8:17).

BLESSINGS OF SALVATION

1. Forgiveness from sins (Eph.1:7).
2. Justification (Rom. 4:25; 8:1)
3. Adoption (Jn.1:12; 1Jn.3:1)
4. Eternal life (Jn. 3:16)
5. Citizenship in Heaven (Phil. 3:20).
6. Eternal inheritance (Heb. 9:15).
7. Authority over demons and diseases (Lk. 10:19).
8. The fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22,23).
9. The presence and power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26; 2Tim.1:7)
10. A glorified resurrection (1Cor. 15:51-54).

REPENTANCE

1. It is God's will that all humans come to repentance (2Pet.3:9)
2. God calls man to repentance
3. Jesus came to call sinners to repentance (Matt.9:13)
4. Repentance is granted through the Sacrificial Death, Resurrection, and Exaltation of Christ (Acts 5:31; 11:18 - Note: Both to Jews and Gentiles)
5. God grants repentance (2Tim.2:25)
6. Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in Jesus' name to all nations (Luke 24:47)

John preached the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel (Acts 13:24)

What Leads us to Repentance

1. Goodness of God leads us to repentance (Rom.2:4)
2. Godly Sorrow leads us to repentance (2Cor.7:9,10)
3. Message of sincere correction leads to repentance (2Tim.2:25)
4. God's rebuke and chastening leads us to repentance (Rev.3:19)

Repentance Involves

1. Knowledge of the Truth (2Tim.2:25)
2. Coming to senses (2Tim.2:26)
3. Extreme grief over sin (Jer.8:6; Matt.11:21)
4. Zeal for God (Rev.3:19)
5. Verbal confession
 - (a) of remorse and grief: "What have I done"? (Jer.8:6)
 - (b) of sins (Ezra 10:1; Dan.9:20; Matt.3:6; Acts 19:18)
6. Repentance from sins (Eze.18:30)
7. Repentance from dead works (that don't proceed from faith) (Heb.6:1)
8. Casting away all the transgressions one has committed (Eze.18:31)
9. Repentance toward God (Acts 20:21)
10. Faith toward God (Heb.6:1)
11. Faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21)
12. Fruits (works, evidences, life results) of repentance (Matt.3:8; Acts 26:20)

Warning

1. The tree that doesn't bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into fire (Matt.3:10)
2. Those who fall away will not be granted repentance again (Heb.6:6; 12:17)
3. Christ will remove the candle from a church that doesn't repent to do the first works (Rev.2:5)
4. Christ will come and fight against the unrepentant with the sword of His mouth (Rev.2:16)
5. Christ will cast into a sickbed those who commit adultery with the world and are unfaithful to Christ (Rev.2:22)
6. The Bible (Law and Prophets) is sufficient to persuade anybody to repentance. To someone who can't be convinced by the Bible, no amount of argument nor any miracle will suffice (Luke.16:30-31)

ADOPTION

Adoption means "placing as son" and is an important theme in the story of man's redemption.

The word "teknon" means "child" and the word "huios" means "son". A son is one who is mature and is considered able to take over responsibility in the household.

There are at least five aspects of adoption:

1. **Right to be called the children (teknon) of God (John 1:12).** Those who receive Jesus into their life are granted the right to be called the children of God. In other words, all legal indictments against them are cancelled and they have a legal **position** as God's children. This is what Jesus procured for us on the cross.
2. **Spirit of adoption sent into hearts of believers (Romans 8:14, 15,16).** The Spirit bears

witness with our spirit that we are the children (teknon) of God. Those who obey the leading of the Spirit are the sons (huios) of God.

3. We are being conformed to the image of the Son (Romans 8:29). Through the Spirit we are being transformed in conformity to the image of the Son (2 Corinthians 3:18). This refers to the **process** of spiritual growth into the likeness of Christ (Ephesians 4: 13,14).

4. The manifestation of the sons of God (Romans 8:19-23). This is also known as the "glorious liberty of the children (teknon) of God", "the redemption of our body", and "the revealing of the sons (huios) of God". This is **prospective** and will happen at the end of the age. At the coming of Christ, this mortal body will put on immortality and will be transformed into the likeness of the body of Christ (Philippians 3:21; 1 John 3:2; 1 Corinthians 15:46-54)

5. Rule with the rod of iron (Revelation 2:26-28). The one who overcomes will rule with Christ and have power over the nations in the coming Kingdom.

GRACE ABOVE LAW

One important thing that we must remember about God's grace is that the Grace of God in Jesus Christ has not nullified the Law of God. Grace is not against God's Law. In fact, Jesus said that He came not to destroy the Law but to fulfill it (Matt.5:17).

The commandments of Grace are tougher and more demanding than the commandments of the Law. The Bible tells us that the Law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came with Jesus Christ (John 1:17). Jesus ushered in the era of Grace. Not that grace was absent in the Old Testament; but that grace could only be available even in the Old Testament because of the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the earth. And, when Christ came Grace came in reality, for until then everything was only shadows (Col.2:17). Therefore, it says, "Grace and truth came with Jesus Christ".

The commandments of Grace, therefore, supersede the commandments of the Law. Grace teaches us true righteousness (Tit.2:11,12; Matt.5:20).

Thus, certain things that were allowed in the Old Testament (like divorce, swearing, polygamy, and tit-for-tat ethics) are not allowed anymore in the New Testament (Matt.5:31,34, 38,39). Most of these things were allowed because of the hardness of human hearts, but God never originally intended them so (Matt.19:8). However, in the Age of Grace when His Grace transforms our hearts, we are called to love our neighbor as ourselves and to pray for our enemies, we are called not to resist evil people but turn our left cheek to someone who slaps on our right (i.e. severely insults and humiliates us). The demands of Grace are higher than the demands of the Law.

The commandments of Grace spring from the spirit of the Law not the letter of the Law. Thus, while the OT command only said, "Do not murder" and "Do not commit adultery", the command of Grace tells us to not even get angry with our brother without cause and tells us looking at a woman lustfully is equal to committing adultery (Matt.5:22,27).

The essence of the command of Grace is Love (Rom.13:8,10; Gal.5:14; James 2:8).

The good news is that this Love is poured into our hearts through the Spirit in the New Testament; therefore, the commandments of God are no longer burdensome or impossible (Rom.5:5; 2Cor.12:9; 1 John 5:3).

PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY

FAITH

Faith is both **propositional** doctrine, teaching, way of belief (Rom.10:8) and **personal** response to God's grace (Rom.10:17)

Facts about Faith

1. Faith can be seen (Matt.9:2; James 2:18; Acts 14:9)
2. Not all have faith (2Thess.3:2)
3. Whatever is not from faith is sin (Rom.14:23)
4. The Gospel is the word of faith (Rom.10:8)
5. Faith has specific intent (e.g. "to be healed", "to remove mountain") (Acts 14:9)
6. Faith is active; it works (James 2:17-20; 1Thess.1:3)
7. Jesus can only act in accordance to our faith (Matt.9:29; Luke 18:42)
8. The presence of faith is bound to bring results, even if it is mustardseed size (Matt.17:20)
9. (remember that a mustard seed, though little, is a complete seed)
10. Faith is prerequisite to receiving answers to prayers (Matt.21:22)
11. It is commendable to be full of faith (Acts 6:5; 11:24)
12. Faith is personal (Rom.14:22)
13. Faith is one of the three abiding virtues (1Cor.13:13)
14. Faith can be increased (2Cor.10:15; 2Thess.1:3)
15. The Resurrection of Jesus gives value and power to both our preaching and our faith (1Cor.15:14,17)
16. Faith works through love (Gal.5:6; Eph.6:23; 1Tim.1:5,14)
17. Jesus will look if people have faith when He returns (Luke 18:8)

What Faith Can Do

1. Faith in Jesus can make a person physically well (Matt.9:22; Mark 10:52; Acts 3:16)
2. Faith can move mountains (Matt.17:20)
3. Prayer of faith will save the sick (James 5:15)
4. Faith purifies hearts (Acts 15:9; 26:8)
5. Faith edifies (1Tim.1:4)
6. We receive the Spirit by the hearing of faith (Gal.3:2,14)
7. God supplies the Spirit to us and works miracles among us by the hearing of faith (Gal.3:5)
8. Faith is the shield that quenches the fiery darts of the devil (Eph.6:16; 1Pet.5:9)
9. Faith is a breastplate along with love (1Thess.5:8)
10. Faith overcomes the world (1John 5:4)
11. We have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Jesus (Eph.3:12)
12. Christ dwells in our hearts through faith (Eph.3:17)
13. Faith brings joy (Phil.1:25)
14. Faith serves sacrificially (Phil.2:17)
15. Faith obtains the promises of God (Heb.11:33; 6:12)
16. Genuine faith passes the tests (1Pet.1:6,7)

Faith, Grace, and Law

1. We are justified by faith, not by the deeds of the law (Rom.3:28)
2. Faith is an important aspect of the law (not against it) (Matt.23:23)
3. We establish the law through faith (Rom.3:31)
4. The law of righteousness was meant to be sought by faith and not by the works of the law (Rom.9:31,32)
5. Faith receives God's grace (Rom.4:16; 5:2)
6. Faith is related to God's promises of grace (Rom.4:16)
7. The law was our tutor until Christ and faith came (Gal.3:23-26)

Sources of Faith

1. Hearing God's word (Rom.10:17; Heb.4:2)
2. Gift of God (Eph.2:8)
3. Measure of Faith dealt by God to each (Rom.12:3,6)
4. Spirit of faith (2Cor.4:13)
5. One of the 9 Gifts of the Spirit (1Cor.12:9)
6. Fruit of the Spirit (Gal.4:22)

We must have faith in

1. God and in Christ (John 14:1)
2. God's word and in His promises (John 4:50; Rom.4:20)
3. The power of God (1Cor.2:5)
4. Working of God (Col.2:12)

We are called to

1. Stand by faith (Rom.11:20)
2. Live by faith in Jesus (Rom. 1:17; Gal.2:20)
3. Stand fast in faith (1Cor.16:13)
4. Continue in faith (Col.1:23)
5. Walk by faith (2Cor.5:7)
6. Abound in faith (2Cor.8:7)
7. Examine if we are in the faith (2Cor.13:5)
8. Be rooted and built up in Jesus and be established in the faith (Col.2:7)
9. Boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus (1Tim.3:13)
10. Nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which we have carefully followed (1Tim.4:6)
11. Be example in faith (1Tim.4:12)
12. Pursue faith (1Tim.6:11)
13. Fight good fight of faith (1Tim.6:12)
14. Be sound in faith (Tit.2:2)
15. Draw near to God with a true heart in full assurance of faith (Heb.10:22)
16. Build ourselves up on our most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit (Jude 1:20)
17. Keep the commandments and the faith of Jesus (Rev.14:12)
18. Earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3)

Qualities of Great and Strong Faith

1. Believes the authority of the spoken word as irresistible (Matt.8:9,10)
2. Is not willing to return empty handed (Matt.15:28)
3. Faith doesn't allow negative possibilities; it is positive about the possibilities promised by God (Matt.21:21; Rom.4:19,21)
4. Faith doesn't waver at the promise of God through unbelief (Rom.4:20)
5. Strong faith gives glory to God (Rom.4:20)
6. Is fully convinced that God is able to perform what He promised (Rom.4:21; Heb.11:1)

Symptoms of Little Faith (i.e. inability to fully trust equal to "no faith" Mark 4:40)

1. Worry about food, drink, and clothes (Matt.6:30,31)
2. Seeking worldly things first and above God's Kingdom and His righteousness (Matt.6:33)
3. Fear of perishing (Matt.8:25,26)
4. Doubt, Wavering (Matt.14:31)
5. Inability to understand (bring into account), or remember the miracles of God (Matt.16:8-10)

Falling from faith

1. Shipwreck of faith by rejecting faith and good conscience (1Tim.1:19)
2. Departing from the faith by listening to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons (1Tim.4:1)
3. Denying faith by abandoning duties towards family (1Tim.5:8)
4. Casting off faith by not standing firm on the commitment (1Tim.5:12)
5. Straying from the faith in greediness and love of money (1Tim.6:10,21)
6. Listening to those who have strayed from faith can overthrow faith (2Tim.2:18)

Helping Faith

1. Jesus intercedes for His disciple so that his faith would not fail (Luke 22:32)
2. We can strengthen others in faith (Luke 22:32; Acts 14:22; 1Thess.3:10)
3. Doctrinal purity and wisdom strengthens the church in faith (Acts 16:5)
4. We can encourage each other by mutual faith (Rom.1:12)
5. We must not dispute over doubtful things with or despise the one who is weak in the faith, but must receive (Rom.14:1,3)
6. Rebuking in order to help believers be sound in the faith (Tit.1:13)

Four Pillars of Faith

1. **Truth. (John 8:32).** Faith without truth is blind; truth without faith is useless.
2. **Love. (Gal.5:6).** Faith that lacks love is empty (1Cor.13:13). God honors love. A prayer of faith that lacks love is abomination.
3. **Patience (Heb.6:12).** Patience is the durability of faith; it means holding on to faith (James 1:28)
4. **Works (James 2:17).** Faith without works is dead.

Some aphorisms on faith

1. Faith is the building block of life. One has to be grounded in the foundation of faith, covered with the shield or walls of faith, and build himself up in faith.
2. If faith is the brick of our life, then love is the cement. Faith works by love.
3. Life looks meaningless and empty when there is no faith. Even love cannot fill the infinite hollow within; because love cannot be quenched by many waters. However, a little bit of faith, just the size of a mustard seed, is enough to dash life with meaning.
4. But, faith is not blind; even as love is also not blind. God commanded us to love Him with our mind, not just with our heart. Likewise, faith does not throw away the mind. A mindless faith is what God detests. Worship of idols as if they were living is an instance of mindless faith. God calls us to reason.
5. Faith and Truth go together. People can believe in something that is false and that false belief can even be dangerous. For instance, some people blow up planes because they believe that doing that will earn them spiritual merit. That is an example of false belief that is dangerous to both self and society.
6. Faith is when a person accepts the truth and applies it to his life.
7. In the same way that truth cannot be self-contradictory, faith is also not self-contradictory.
8. Truth that is not believed in is useless; belief that is not true can be dangerous!
9. If somebody says that he doesn't believe in God anymore, he either means that God doesn't exist or that he can't believe in what he thinks is God. Perhaps, his idea of God is wrong; because, once he has the right idea of God, he won't be able to deny God. But, one can only say something like something doesn't exist in the whole universe if someone has total knowledge of the entire universe – in other words, is omniscient, is God himself (which, by the way, is not the case here).
10. Faith in God is of ultimate kind and is, therefore, both unique and absolute. Since it is not concerned with contingent things of this world it is also not like the belief in the contingent things of the world.
11. Belief in God is foundational to our commonsense assumptions about this world as both moral and rational. Anyone who denies God must also deny the existence of absolute morals and absolute truth, for both lose their foundation if their foundation is found within this world itself. It would be like trying to place a ball on that ball itself.
12. The unchanging nature and character of God is the foundation of true morality and His veracity is the foundation of all reasonability and truth.
13. We believe in the present what we hope about the future; the future being invisible at the present. The future possesses the goal and meaning that integrates our present life and gives us a reason to move forward.
14. False hope is hoping in things that are unreal in the sight of God; for instance, the hope of the demons to defeat God. This is a false hope because it is not based on a reality sanctioned by God. Their faith, therefore, lacks a solid basis and their hope has no real anchor. It is also, therefore, both useless and dangerous. Obviously, false faith leads to false hopes.
15. Job did not flicker because he knew that though circumstances might change, the nature and being of God is beyond the shadow of a change, and that his faith was anchored not in the appearance of circumstances but in the constancy of God. His faith was not a response of the flesh that sought physical motivation to go on.

Faith is the ground or basis of things hoped for

1. The faith that is not based on God's Word is not foundational about the things of God. It leads to somewhere else. But the faith that is connected to God's Word is the ground for experiencing the things of God.
2. The faith of God is an act directly related to God and not this space-time world; therefore, it pierces through space-time and catches hold of the hem of God's garment unleashing His power and blessings in this temporal frame.
3. An act of faith connects to the will and power of God. Therefore, Jesus said, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed...nothing shall be impossible to you" (Mt. 17:20); for through faith what is possible to God is also possible to the believer.
4. The experience of faith is the experience of divine truth. This is very obvious in the Scriptural assertion that the natural or carnal man cannot receive the things of God (1Cor. 2:14). They have no personal significance for him. There were many people who saw and heard Jesus during His physical ministry in this world; however, it was very few who really believed and, consequently, experienced Him.
5. Knowledge is composed of truth; therefore, knowing something means also to believe in the truth about that thing.
6. False belief doesn't constitute knowledge; it constitutes ignorance and deception. True belief alone, therefore, is knowledge.
7. Faith is the basis of spiritual experiences.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for

1. Whenever we have faith we also have the things we hope for in the form of faith now. That is why Jesus said "Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours" (Mk. 11:24). He doesn't ask them to believe that they will receive it in future but to believe that they have already received it in faith.
2. God is not conditioned by time but if something is "yes" in Him then it is eternally "yes" and the same in future, present, and past. Thus, it is not whether that thing will be real to us in the future but whether it is already real in the sight of God that is significant.
3. That is faith: to know the future in the present as true.
4. A man of faith doesn't live his life regretting about the past or worrying about his present but he is elated by faith to see the hopes of the distant future as a timeless reality and lives his life in accordance to the reality of those facts in the sight of God (Phil. 3:710).

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for

1. God is the foundation and terminal of faith since He is the Beginning and the End of all reality; for everything consists and subsists by Him (Isa. 41:4; 48:12; Col. 1:7; Rev. 21:6).
2. This world cannot be the final source and end of faith since it is contingent and therefore not final in itself.
3. Since we ourselves are part of this world, to trust in this world would amount to trusting in nothing (objective); for, it would be like a man trying to walk on his boots.
4. It is the reality of God where the world finally collides and comes to an end. There is nothing conceivable by reason, experience, or faith beyond Him. Therefore, the faith of God is final.
5. Since this faith is distinctive and final, being based upon the absolute and unchanging nature of God, this assurance is also unshakeable and final. That is the reason why a man of faith is at peace with himself; he is not alarmed at the appearances of contradicting situations because he knows that the thing he is hoping for is assured in the sight of God (Isa. 26:3).

6. Fear is a sign of unbelief; that is the reason why cowards cannot inherit the kingdom of God (Rev. 21:8).
7. The assurance of hope is stronger than hope alone. For in it hope is combined with confidence.

Faith is the Evidence of Things Unseen

1. Faith doesn't need further evidence for its existence than its presence itself. Since it is the final ground of the things hoped for, it is also the evidence of the things hoped for. It is not based on anything else. It is the basis for everything that we know and experience.
2. Attempts to base faith on rational or empirical proofs, i.e. on logic or experience, adds nothing to it. These may help to justify beliefs but cannot be the source of faith. One must not search for evidence for faith. Faith itself must be seen as the evidence for everything else.
3. There are, however, certain criteria to measure the authenticity of such faith since this could easily lead to superstition and false belief: (a) The believer must possess a sound mind, (b) Faith must be open to reason; in other words, open to verification and falsification or, at least, justification, (c) This faith must be connected with righteousness and peace; this is so because the faith of God cannot contradict the character of God, (d) It must not contradict the written Word of God, i.e., the Scriptures, which reveal God.
4. Faith as voluntary act is the precursor to knowledge as Jesus said, "If any man desires to do His will (God's pleasure), he will know (have the needed illumination to recognize, and can tell for himself) whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking from Myself and of My own accord and on My own authority" (Jn. 7:17, Amplified). Thus, the will-to-believe is the condition for the knowledge of truth. If anyone is unwilling to accept the truth, then all evidence is meaningless (perhaps detestable) to him.
5. Faith is a choice, it is not automatically produced.
6. When one encounters the revelation of God one has the choice of accepting it or rejecting it. The nature of both the encounter and choice is spiritual and not rational or physical. Therefore, the choice is also a moral one.
7. The world has no substitute for the faith of God.

Little Faith Vs Great Faith

For instance, if someone can believe that God created the universe, then he should be also able to believe that God is in complete control of the universe and all things. However, if such a "believer" begins to lose faith in the control of God or provision of God, he is a man of little faith.

In Matthew 6:30, Jesus rebukes those people as having little faith who know that God provides for the flowers and the birds, but they fail to apply that logic consistently to their life; they fail to believe that God can also provide for them. Such faith is inconsistent, and is called "little faith".

In Matthew 8:26, Jesus rebukes the disciples for their little faith because they knew that Jesus was with them in the boat, and still were not able to reason, or logically conclude that no storm could harm them if their Savior was with them. They had a broken, fragmented faith that failed to bind two experiences together consistently with faith.

In Matthew 14:31, Jesus rebukes Peter for having little faith because he was walking on the water but when he saw the winds he almost seems to have forgotten, or was not able to take

into consideration, that he had been actually "really" walking on water, and if he could walk on water, then what could any storm do to him.

In Matthew 16:8, Jesus rebuked the disciples because they failed to reckon their experience of seeing Jesus's miracles with the loaves and fish and began thinking of lack of bread again.

Faith is not anti-reason. When people fail to properly reason and have faith in consistency, they are people of "little" or fragmented faith.

Little Faith is equal to no faith. What is called as little faith in one Gospel is called as "no faith" in another (Mark 4:40; Matt 8:26)

Jesus said that if someone had faith like mustard seed and does not doubt then he can move mountains (Matt 17:20; 21:21)

Remember, Faith like mustard seed is NOT small faith or little faith. **A mustard seed, though small is complete and consistent.** It can give rise to a plant. But, if that seed is broken into pieces, it becomes inconsistent and useless.

Similarly, people who can believe God about one thing but cannot believe God for other things are having broken, fragmented, and inconsistent faith. **If they can believe that God can forgive sins, but cannot believe that God can heal diseases, then they have "little faith".** But, if one has faith as consistent as a complete mustard seed, then no matter how small and insignificant that faith looks to other people, that faith is enough to do great things.

Faith always has results – "Your faith has made you well" (Matt 9:22)

Great Faith is Faith that is Consistent and Does Proper Reasoning

For instance, in Matthew 8:10, the Centurion reasons:

1. I am a man of military authority and what I say my soldiers obey.
2. Jesus is a man of supernatural authority, so what He says the elements must obey.
3. Therefore, if Jesus only says a word, my servant will be healed.

He reasoned properly and was able to apply his knowledge of authority in military office to faith in the power of Jesus over sickness. That's why Jesus called His faith as "great".

Similarly, in Matthew 15:28, Jesus calls the faith of the Syro-phoenician woman as great because she had a very rational and reasonable reply to Jesus. Jesus said to her that it is not good to give the bread of children to dogs (He called her dog!). But, she immediately reasoned, "But, even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the Master's table". She only needed the crumbs, she said. That was great faith!

FASTING

Biblical Fasting is not governed by laws regarding when, how, and where to fast. There are no laws in the New Testament regarding what a person can eat or not eat during fasting, what a person can wear or not wear during fasting, or when a person should start or break his fast. Also, the New Testament does not command fasting as a compulsory religious act. However,

the New Testament does recommend fasting in various ways.

The Importance of Fasting in the New Testament

- **Jesus Himself Fasted.** In Matthew 4:2, we are told that Jesus fasted for 40 days and nights when, after His baptism, He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.
- **Jesus Expected His Disciples to Fast.** In Matthew 6:16, Jesus said, “When you fast...” He didn’t say, “If you fast...” but, “When” which indicates that He did expect His disciples to fast. He also declared to the Jews that when He is taken away, His disciples would fast (Matt.9:15).
- **Jesus Declared the Importance of Fasting in the Ministry of Deliverance.** In Matthew 17:21, Jesus mentioned in connection with casting out demons that a certain kind don’t leave except through prayer and fasting. Of course, this verse is missing in some manuscripts and modern versions such as the NIV skip it. Nevertheless, the very fact that Jesus fasted for 40 days and nights during His temptation by the devil does confirm the importance of fasting in the spiritual empowerment of Christian. It is worth noting, though, that the word “fasting” is missing from phrases where prayer is mentioned in these manuscripts that the NIV and others think to be authentic (Mark 9:29; 1Cor.7:5).
- **The Early Church Ministered to the Lord through Fasting and Prayer (Acts 13:2)**
- **The Church Fasted and Prayed Before Sending the Apostles into the Missionary Journey (Acts 13:3).**
- **The Apostles Fasted and Prayed When Appointing Elders in the Churches (Acts 14:23).**
- **Paul Expected Christians to Devote Themselves Time to Fasting and Prayer (1Cor.7:5)**

Fasting in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament,

- Fasting was often an expression of sorrow over sin (1Sam.7:6)
- Fasting was also often an expression of sorrowful mourning (1Sam.31:13; 2Sam.1:12)
- Fasting was a way of refraining from any bodily pleasure in order to express extreme sorrow over a situation and one’s serious submission to God (Esther 4:16)
- Fasting was usually a way of humbling self to petition and pray to God for help (2Sam.12:6; Ezr.8:23; Neh.1:4; Psalms 35:13)
- Sometimes a Holy Fast was declared to gather people to cry out to God in intercession (Joel 1:14)

Fasting in the New Testament

In the New Testament,

- Fasting is always accompanied with prayer (Matt.17:21; Mark 9:29; Luke 2:37; 1Cor.7:5; Acts 13:2; 14:23)
- Fasting is done in order to seek God’s will in prayer (Acts 13:3; 14:23)
- Fasting is an act of worshiping and ministering unto God (Acts 13:2)

Divinely Acceptable Fasting Involves

- Love to God and One’s Neighbor (Isaiah 58:3-11)
- Genuineness; Not, Hypocrisy (Matt.6:16-18)
- Humility; Not, Pride (Luke 18:12-14)

- Concern for Others (1Cor.7:5; Isaiah 58:6)

BOREDOM AND JOY

Boredom is the sense of a drudgeful passage of time. It is the sense of monotony, humdrum, and tedium associated with the sluggish passage of time.

(Read Gen.29:20)

Characteristics of Boredom

1. Lack of challenge
2. Lack of pleasure
3. Lack of excitement
4. Lack of joy
5. Lack of satisfaction
6. Lack of motivation
7. Lack of a sense of mobility - Time seems to move very slow.

Boredom is

1. The symptom of a devalued existence (Eccl.2:17)
2. The symptom of a disengaged existence (1Thess.5:14; 2Thess.3:6,11).
3. The sense of wearisomeness and vexation of spirit (Eccl.2:17)
4. Connected with the sense of emptiness and meaninglessness. (Eccl.2:22,23)

Sources of Boredom

1. Separation from the presence of the Lord where there is fullness of joy (Ps.16:11)
2. Quenching of the Spirit or Lack of the Spirit (Jude 1:19; 1Thess.5:19)
3. Unwillingness to rejoice in the Lord always (Phil.4:4)
4. Unwillingness to constantly pray (1Thess.5:17)
5. Unwillingness to be thankful in every thing (1Thess.5:18)
6. Unwillingness to meditate on the Word of God (Psa.1:2)
6. Craving after sensual pleasures or sensual excitement (Num.11:6)
7. Craving for something new and strange always (Acts 17:21; Prov.5:3)

Overcoming Boredom

1. Refusing to be bored by committing to rejoice in the Lord always (Ps.9:2; 31:7; Isa.61:10)
2. Redeeming every moment of time to glorify God (Eph.5:16; Col.4:5)
3. Disciplining self to study, meditate, intercede, and minister (2Tim.4:2,5; 1Thess.5:17; 1Tim.4:13,14,15)
4. Avoiding the craving for some strange and new experience that is not granted by God. (Num 11:6; 2Tim.2:22)
5. Worshipping God in private and corporate worship (Col.3:16; Eph.5:19,20)

FEAR AND LOVE

"Your fear rules over my thoughts night and day,
And my love is incomplete till fear leads the way..."

Love involves the element of fear. But, it is not the fear of being hurt; it is the fear of offending

the one we love.

When the Bible commands us to fear God, it does have the two aspects of fear in mind:

1. Fear that is attached to the love of God (Deut.10:12; cf. 2Cor.7:11,15). This is what is usually referred to as *filial fear*. It is also reverential.
2. Fear that is attached to the justice of God, especially with regard to punishment (Deut 4:23,24; Heb.12:28,29). This may be referred to as *servile fear*

The Bible never encourages *servile fear*, which involves servitude in order to avoid displeasure of God. (Rom.8:15; 2Tim.1:7; 1Jn.4:18).

A man who loves God has filial and reverential fear for God and keeps away from evil because evil offends God (Prov.8:13).

A man who only keeps away from evil to avoid punishment will resort to evil when he begins to believe that the danger isn't there (Rom.6:1,2; 2:4; Exo.8:15).

1 John 4:18 tells us that "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love."

This refers to servile fear. It involves torment. It does not edify because it doesn't transform a person inside out. It doesn't perfect love. However, servile fear at least works as a negative deterrent.

Filial love, however, is a positive deterrent of evil.

We must remember that servile fear anywhere (whether at home, at office, or at school) is not going to build healthy relationships. It is tyrannical. But, where love is not lighthearted but is given depth by the seriousness of filial fear (and filial fear does have intense depth, for it affects the depths of one's consciousness of self in juxtaposition with the other), then, love becomes self-giving.

A husband who loves his wife and doesn't say things or do things that may offend and hurt her has filial fear. A child who obeys his parents, even when they are not around or may not find out what he has been doing, honors his parents through filial fear, because he knows that even if they didn't find out what he had been doing, the prohibited thing is hurtful to his parents, and because he loves them, he cannot bear to do the hurtful thing. From both these examples, we realize that true love involves fear and reverence.

Filial fear is not fear of being hurt by God. God cannot hurt us, for God is Love (1Jn.4:8). It is we who hurt ourselves when we try to fight against the ground of our being, and this grieves God (Eze.33:11).

Servile fear is not fear of grieving God; it is the fear of displeasing God and being hurt by His displeasure. It is servile, tyrannical, and legalistic. It involves bondage (Rom.8:15). It does not belong to perfect love; for perfect love casts away all fears.

Filial fear is clean and pure (Psa.19:9). It purifies the soul (Pro.16:6)

CALLING AND CAREER

There comes a point in the life of every young person when s/he asks the question, "What career track should I choose for my life?" It is important at this juncture to clearly differentiate between calling and career. There is certainly a difference between both of them; though, often the difference is not visible at once. So, the question, "What is the calling of my life?" precedes "What is the career track that I must choose?" But, first let's point out the differences:

1. Career or vocation can be chosen; calling is given by God.
2. Career is functional and a means to an end; calling is the end or purpose of one's life.
3. Career is the occupation that one is trained for; calling precedes training.
4. Careers can change based on the demand-supply curve of the market and opportunity of work; calling is permanent.

One important ground verse of career choice in the Bible is Ecclesiastes 9:10: "**Whatever your hand finds to do, do it** with all your might." (Emphatics mine). Ephesians 4:28 equalizes it with the ethic of generosity that requires that everybody must "work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need." Paul himself sometimes resorted to the tent-making business because he was a tentmaker by profession (Acts 18:3); however, he was called to be an apostle and set apart for the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom.1:1). Tent-making was not his calling; just a profession. But, of course, Paul's choice to continue in this work at certain times was very voluntary; in fact, a minister of the Gospel is expected to be supported by the church in the work of the Gospel (1Cor.9:14; Matt.4:19,20; 1Cor.9:5,6). However, Paul didn't want to be a burden to others; though he did gratefully receive what was cheerfully given to him (2Cor.11:7-9). He strongly declares:

*We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. **We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow.** For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." ...we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to **settle down and earn the bread they eat.** (2Thess 3:7-12, Emphatics mine)*

Now there are a few things to keep in mind when opting for a career track.

1. Do not confuse life's passion with career. For instance, one may have a passion for photography; however, one doesn't need to make photography one's career just for the passion of photography. He must first do what work he finds at hand, the work that is most conducive to earning his bread in his situation. Eventually, he may have resources to do photography as well.
2. Do not choose a career track that is unethical and unbiblical. That should be very clear. It is unimaginable for a Christian to be working in a cigarette or liquor company, for instance (nor sell or market such stuff).
3. Choose a career that matches your personality type. There are some who are good in jobs that require people-relationship. There are others who are good only in book-keeping or paper work.
4. Choose a career that you can be more efficient in. A person may not have the abilities needed for medical training, to be a doctor, but may have the abilities to start or manage hospitals that can employ scores of doctors. Everybody has different and equally important abilities that must be discovered, polished, and perfected. Not everyone may fulfill the

physical and psychological requirements to be in an army, to be a vocalist, or to be a wrestler.

5. Choose a career that will not be a burden but a joy and enthusiasm to you. Of course, to the lazy guy, no work is enthusiastic; and, companies must take care not to employ people who lack enthusiasm. However, if a person who loves to work as a car engineer tries to work in a school; though, he may be efficient, his enthusiasm may be low. Similarly, a person who is most satisfied in the teaching profession cannot be very happy for long in a car factory. But, if that is the only job at hand, it is important to consider the situation in light of God's purposes. There are exceptional conditions; but, a child of God will understand purpose through the understanding of the divine calling that drives him.

6. Do not choose a profession as a career that has very low market demand. It may become a self-imposed ordeal. For instance, if someone wishes to keep running a typing institute (that teaches typing on old type-writers), his business may fail; he will need to upgrade to Desk Top Publishing (DTP) in order to keep at pace with the demand-supply curve.

7. Get the training and self-education necessary for the career you wish to pursue. Learning is not a once for all event; it is dynamic and goes on. One must continue to upgrade oneself, rehearse, repeat, think over, discover, develop, and progress in the field of occupation he is in.

8. Don't just ask, "What is the most profitable track?" But, look to a balance of your abilities, equipment, enthusiasm, and possibilities. There are other things like family, place, risk, church, and time-framework that you may need to consider when choosing a career track.

9. It is important to prayerfully consider a career. However, one must keep in mind the "whatever your hands find to do" principle. Don't linger over uncertainty of choice. God gives wisdom to those who don't waver and are full of faith. Make a godly choice quickly and do not change it.

10. Avoid short-cuts and dishonest methods. God doesn't bless such efforts (Prov. 20:21; 21:5; 22:1).

11. Trust in God; not in money (Prov. 11:28; 23:5; Matt. 6:24; 1Tim. 6:17)

Again, to sum it, career can be chosen, jobs may change and be upgraded; however, calling remains unchanged. So, it is important for one to ask, "What is God's calling over my life?"

1. The first step, of course, is to receive Jesus as Lord over one's life; for unless, one's eyes are opened to the light of God and one has moved from darkness to light, one cannot see the purposes of God.

2. Then, it is important to look into the most driving passion of one's heart that relates to the Great Commission of evangelizing and discipling the nations. One's passion may be to see how much one can give away in charity to help those who are in need. Another's passion may be to be involved in and/or sponsor Christian arts and media. Someone else may have the passion to be a personal assistant to Christian ministers. Someone's passion may be hospitality. Someone else may find deep sense of fulfillment in ministering to children in the Church. There is no end to the many different areas of ministry; and, certainly, we all have been called to bear witness to the truth and serve others in one way or the other (John 18:37; Mark 10:45; Gal. 5:13).

3. One must note what area of work of the Lord one is most happy and more gifted serving in. For instance, if I am more gifted in interior designing, then physical arrangement and designing may be where God wishes to use me. It is no use blaming others and feeling unsatisfied that others are not good at something that I am good at. Instead of complaining about the same, it is important to step up and make a difference in that area.

4. Be sensitive to the voice of the Lord. He speaks through His Word, through His servants, through other believers, and through the inner voice. However, be careful not to be influenced

by human ideas regarding what the Lord has clearly revealed to you (Gal.1:16). But, of course, certainly, God's revelation doesn't conflict with the revelation of His Word.

5. Be sensitive to the Lord's circumstantial guidance. There are no chance happenings and accidental events in the life of God's child, when his heart has totally committed itself to Him. God will bring circumstances and connections in our life that may be like the winds on the sail of a ship to lead us where He wants us to be. He orchestrates our lives when we commit these instruments into His care.

God does gift us with a personality, with certain talents, and brings in circumstances and opportunities in our lives that will help us to be equipped for a work. In that sense, yes, God has certain job areas that He has gifted us to be fruitful in. However, instead of spending too much time in confusion regarding what that career track exactly is, one must follow the principle of doing "whatever one's hand finds to do"; i.e. to know what job one's hand can handle and what most fruitful job is at hand. There are some who waste much time in job-hunting alone, and then use dishonest means to get that job. That certainly is not the biblical way. The bottom line: "If anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask of God" (James 1:5). Of course, it is also very important to ask oneself why God has placed us in a position in a place. Queen Esther had to ask that and she discovered it as well (Esther 4:14; Acts 17:26,27). But, in all this quest for career one must not forget this: "what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul" (Mar 8:36). A purposeful life is only one that gains and gathers something for eternity. It certainly means nothing if I am very useful to the world but useless (or less useful) to God

PRINCIPLES OF PROSPERITY

The Bible teaches us the true path of prosperity. The Bible is not poverty minded; in fact, it teaches us principles that will help us live successfully in this world. It teaches us the wisdom and skill necessary to use the world without relying on or being attached to it (1Cor.7:31). If anyone thinks that the Bible does not teach us the wisdom of success, then he may have to throw away a great chunk of the Bible. But, we must not forget some basic principles. Again this is not about some prosperity gospel, but about knowing the way of God's kingdom.

1. Put God First

God is able to supply all our needs according to His riches in glory (Phil 4:19), but we must remember that He only fulfills the desires of those who first delight in Him (Ps.37:4). If our heart has no interest in the things of God and in the work of God, then it proves that we are not delighting in Him. But, to those who love Him He works all things together for good (Rom. 8:28).

But this also means that we seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness (Matt.6:33). It means to honor God with the best of our possessions (Prov.3:9). It means to love the Lord with all our soul, our strength, our heart, and our mind.

2. Do Not Let Wealth Be Your Master

Jesus said that man cannot serve both God and mammon, or money (Matt.6:24).

--We must not allow the Love of Money (1Tim.6:9,10)

--We must not allow the Pride of Money (1Tim.6:17)

--We must not allow the Trust in Money (1Tim.6:17b)

3. Work Hard

God prescribed work for humans. He said, "Six days you shall work...." (Exod. 20:9). The Bible warns that the one who doesn't work must not also eat (2Thess.3:10). Check our study on the Lazy for what the Bible says about such. The Bible tells us to never give up or lag behind in diligence (Ro.12:11). He who works hard will eat the fruit of his labors (2Tim.2:6). A man who hardly works will hardly have anything left. But, remember to also separate your sabbaticals for sharpening the ax (Eccl.10:10).

4. Owe No One Anything

In other words, do not become a debtor to people. Debts ruin economies. The Old Testament never allowed debts beyond one's last surety, his cloak. Yet, people often ended up in slavery because of debts. The Bible commands us not to be indebted to anyone in anything except in love (Rom.13:8).

5. Be Merciful and Generous to the Poor

The Bible says that he who gives to the poor lends to the Lord and God pays it back (Pro.19:17). The Bible calls us to mercy and generosity in the same way that God has shown mercy and generosity to us (Matt.18:32,33). God blesses the generous hearted (Pro.11:25; 22:9).

6. Be Careful Who You Associate With

Do not get into business with winebibbers and gluttons (Prov.23:21). Do not associate with darkness and be unequally yoked with unbelievers (2Cor.6:14). Do not receive gifts for God's work from unbelievers (3Jn.1:7). Do not eat the bread of a miser (Prov.23:6). This doesn't mean we become isolated (1Cor.5:10); however, we must be wise about who we work with and what we do.

7. Pay All Dues, Taxes

We must pay what belongs to the government to the government, and what belongs to God to God (Matt.22:21). We must pay all taxes and customs due (Ro.13:7).

8. Share Your Personal Needs With God Alone

Prayer must be a moment of intimacy and privacy with God. Don't waste time sharing needs with people. Invest your precious moments with the Father who specifically cares and selflessly loves you (Matt.6:5). He does answer the secret prayer of a heart that trusts solely in God. He cares to give (Matt.7:9-11).

CHASTENING

Chastening refers to the constructive corrective measures that God takes towards His children for their good. When we err and are hardened towards sin, God chastens us in order to correct us and lead us in the truth.

A. Why Does God Chasten?

- Because He deals with us as His sons. (Heb.12:7)
- Because He loves us. (Rev.3:19; Heb.12:6)
- Because He wants to build us up. (2Cor.13:10)

B. Ways of Chastening

Rod and Rebuke (Proverbs 29:15)

Rebuke

-Through His servants (Psalm 141:5; 1Tim.5:20; 2Tim.4:2; Titus 1:13; 2:15)

-Through His Word (2 Tim. 3:16)

Rod

External:

-With the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men (2 Samuel 7:14; Hosea 10:10)

-Sword, Famine, Pestilence (national) (2 Samuel 24:13; 2Chr.

20:9; Jer.11:22; 14:12,13; 15:2; 21:9;24:10; 27:8,13; 29:17,18; 32:36; 34:17; 38:2; 42:17,22; 44:13; Eze. 6:11,12; 12:16)

-Infirmity, Sickness (1Cor. 11:30, 32; James 5:14-16)

Internal: Inner agony and sensing the displeasure of God and God's silence towards our prayers (guilt, lack of peace, etc) (Psalm 6:1-3, 6; 38:1ff.; Eph. 4:30; 1Pet. 3:7)

C. Our Response to Chastening

-Repent from our sins

-Humble ourselves

-Turn completely to God

-Surrender to His will

-Obey what He commands

HOW DO WE KNOW IF AN OPPORTUNITY IS FROM GOD?

1. Usually, it should be clear; but, if there is doubt, then there are reasons to reconsider (**Rom.14:23**)

2. Sometimes the goal may be noble, but the opportunity not. Any opportunity that compels you to hurry ahead of God will land you in a crash (Jer.48:10).

3. It should not invite you to do things or employ means that the Bible clearly forbids. If it does so, it is not divine opportunity but temptation to sin (James 1:13).

4. It should not tempt God, i.e. it should not be something like "I will jump from the pinnacle, He will send His angels in time to save me, because His Word promises so" (Matt.4:6,7). It will lead to disaster.

5. It should not be forced by human whims, even so-called prophecy or divine leading, especially when you don't have peace about it in your heart. Remember how a young prophet fell prey to a lion because he disobeyed God by listening to the lie of a prophet (1Kgs.13:16-24). There is a reason why Paul mentioned that when He heard God's call, he didn't confer with flesh and blood (Gal.1:16).

6. It should not be governed by lust. James tells us that lust seduces and leads to sin.

The leading of God is opposed to lust (James 1:14,15).

7. It should not attempt to deceive God's servants, thinking that they will not know. God has given them to watch over your souls (Heb.13:17). To try to hide from them facts out of shame or fear of disapproval may prove that the means are evil. It is against the Spirit of God. Remember Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:3,4, 9,10).

ECCLESIOLOGY

MEANING

The English word “church” comes from the Greek *Kyriakon* meaning “of the Lord”. The term used in the New Testament, however, is *ekklesia* (formed of *ek*, “out”, and *kaleo*, “called”), meaning the “called out”. Peter refers to the church as not a building made up of bricks or stones, not as a place or a physical structure, but as a people who are “called out” of darkness into God’s marvelous light.

The church is the **community** of the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. She is also known as the Lamb’s wife (Rev. 21:9; Eph. 5:25-27; Rev. 19:7), the **body** of Christ (1Cor.12:27), and the **temple** of God (1Pet.2:5,6; Eph.2:21,22; 1Cor.3:16,17). The church is the **household** of God, His **family**; therefore, there must be unity, cooperation, edification, and productivity in it (Eph. 2:19; 1Cor.1:10; Jn.13:35; Gal.6:1,2). The church is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph.2:20). Therefore, apostolic doctrine and prophetic edification are foundational to the church (Acts 2:42; 15:32). The church is a **fellowship** of fellow-believers. Therefore, Christians are commanded not to forsake assembling together (Heb.10:25). The church is God’s field and God’s building (1Cor.3:9).

The church is both **universal** and **local**: i.e. it is the general assembly of all born-again believers all over the earth and in heaven (Heb.12:24); but, it is also local in the sense that believers in a particular place are one family - in that sense we talk about the church and the churches (Acts 9:31).

The church was **a mystery** hidden in the Old Testament period (Eph.1:9,10); but, manifested in the world today. It is the mystery of the body of Christ, that there is no Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, slave nor free in Christ (Eph.2:14,15,16; Gal.3:8), and that in Christ God reconciles the world to Himself and gathers all things together both in heaven and on earth (2Cor.5:19; Eph.1:9,10).

A Few More Names

1. Church of God (Acts 20:28; 1Cor.1:2). The church belongs to God the Father.

2. Church of the Firstborn (Heb.12:23). The children of God that bear the image of the Second Man, the Heavenly one (1Cor.15:47,48; 1Pet.1:3). Before His resurrection, Jesus was always referred to as the “only begotten Son”; but, after the resurrection, He is the Firstborn among many brethren (Col.1:15,18).

The Church is not an organization, but a living body, an organism (1Pet.2:4). It is not a man-made ecumenical organization with a hierarchical structure. We are not bound in one administrative structure; but, we are bound together in one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all (Eph.4:4-6). Jesus made it clear to His disciples that He wasn’t interested in a human organization (Mark 9:38-40). However, this doesn’t mean that there is no authority structure in the local church or in the church universal. (Heb.13:7,17; Acts 14:23; 20:28; 1Pet.5:2,3,4; Jude 1:8).

The Lord Jesus Christ appoints apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers, and pastors for the care and edification of the church (Eph. 4:11-12). The Holy Spirit gifts individuals with the gifts of the Holy Spirit for the edification of the church (1Cor.12). The church is called to proclaim the

Gospel of Jesus Christ to every nation, to make disciples out of them and teach them the teachings of Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:19-20). This proclamation is accompanied with signs and wonders that the Lord works to confirm His Word (Mk. 16:20; Heb.2:4).

Now, while it is true that the church is not an organization, but a body whose head is Christ, the New Testament is not against organizing efforts for the propagation of the Gospel and ministry to the poor. Thus, we see that local churches choose persons and entrust them with ministry responsibilities (2Cor.8:18,19,23). Similarly, local churches consult with other churches on doctrinal matters (Acts 15). Also, they circulated the epistles of Paul (Col.4:16; 2Pet.3:15,16), which was a forerunner of the Bible distribution era. In modern times, organizing efforts in the form of Bible Societies, theological seminaries, mass media communication of God's word, and social ministries are examples of such cooperation. Usually, it is local churches worldwide who support the work of mission; but, a great majority are also individuals.

The two ordinances of the church are water baptism (Matt.28:19) and the Lord's Table (1Cor.11:23-29).

Jesus Christ will return to this earth for His church. Then, the dead in Christ will first rise up and those who are alive will be caught up to Him in the clouds to be with Him forever (1Thess.4:16,17).

In 1 Peter 2:9, the church is referred to as

1. A Chosen Generation. This is in contrast to the Adamic generation that is considered to be crooked and perverse (Phil. 2:15). This generation is born not of the will of flesh but of the will of God. The church is an assembly of "born again" believers. She is a generation that is handpicked of God as a special treasure of His own. They have been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph.1:4).

2. A Royal Priesthood. The church is not a religious system of priesthood, laymen, and priestcraft. Every believer in the Body of Christ is a priest unto God. The priesthood of believers is royal, coming from the heritage of Jesus Christ, who descended from David, of the tribe of Judah. It is Melchizedekian; not, Aaronic. The priests bear royal authority of the Kingdom of God.

3. A Holy Nation. The church is sanctified by the faith of the Gospel, by the blood of Jesus Christ, and by the Holy Spirit. She belongs to God and is set apart and separated from the world by the Cross of Jesus Christ. It is a Nation made up of people who come out of many nations.

4. A Peculiar People. The church is a special people, who possesses several special distinctives: Christ, the New Covenant, the Promises of God, Eternal Life, Eternal Inheritance. They have an identity that comes from God. They belong to heaven.

The purpose of this being "called out" is to showforth the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

PURPOSE, TASK, AND RULE OF THE CHURCH

The purpose of the church is the glory of God (Eph 1:6; 5:27)

The task of the church is evangelization – making disciples (Matt 28:19,20)

The rule of the church is love – the command to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves, which is true piety and religion (Matt 22:37-40; James 1:27).

The purpose will be fulfilled, the task will be completed, but the rule of love will abide forever.

The purpose must not be confused with the task. The task must not be confused with the rule. The Great Commission is to preach the goodnews to all people. The Great Commandment is to love God with our entire being and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Social justice, liberation, mercy, and caring for the poor is an expression of who we are; salvation of souls, spiritual transformation, and discipleship is the reason why we are here on earth. Love is the motive of evangelism (2Cor.5:14).

LOCAL CHURCH

A local church is a group of believers in a particular geographical location.

A Local Church

1. Is NOT a linguistic group of Christians (Acts 6:1 - Both the Hebrews and the Greeks were in the same local church). The churches at Jerusalem and Antioch were never divided into separate Greek and Hebrew churches.
2. Is NOT a racial group of Christians - A Black Church or A White Church or A Dalit Church as a racial division in the same locality doesn't exist.
3. Is NOT a human leader-oriented group of Christians. (1Cor.1:12). No church could call itself by the name of a human leader, even if it were planted by him (1Cor.3:6).
4. Is NOT a classed group of Christians. The church was not divided into the Slave Church or the Aristocratic Church (Col.3:11).
5. Is a geographical group of Christians (Acts 9:31; 1Cor.16:19; 2Cor.8:1; Rev.1:20;2:1). It is only distinguished by its geographical location; however, the location must not become an ecclesiastical cult. For instance, members from a location, e.g., from Delhi, going to London are not supposed to start there a Delhite Church.

Planting of the Local Church

1. A local church is planted in a place when the Gospel seeds are sown there and people get saved. The sowing might be by an apostle (1Cor.3:6), an evangelist (Acts 8:5), or any disciple who bears the testimony of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:1,4).
2. The Holy Spirit guides the growth of the church in form and function (1Cor.3:6; Acts 9:31;1Cor.12:4-11).
3. Apostles, prophets, and teachers (teaching-pastors) play important role in equipping the church qualitatively in the true faith of God (Eph.4:11ff; Acts 20:31,32). Evangelists, meanwhile, continue to proclaim the gospel to regions beyond.
4. The apostles or the ones given authority by Christ appoint elders and commend the church to the Lord (Acts 14:22,23; Tit.1:5).

Things to Note

1. The identity of a Christian doesn't come from the local church, but from Christ and from his/her belongedness to the universal church (Mark 9:41; Heb.12:22).
2. Being listed in the local church doesn't guarantee being listed in the Book of Life (Rev.3:5; 2:5).
3. In the modern context of multiple denominations and options to select which "church" to go to, one must not forget that the church is one body and all believers in Jesus Christ are one in the Lord. The only separatists are those who are either carnal, sensual, or unbelieving ones. The true believer will accept other believers as fellow Christians in the one body (regardless of which "church" one goes to). They are always keen for spiritual fellowship one with another whenever and wherever possible. (Jn.17:11; 1Cor.1:10-12; Jude 1:19; 1Jn.2:19; Eph.4:4-

5; Col.3:15).

4. Opposition of the Way can justify withdrawal of disciples from a group that is not-Christian; of course, the church is a believing community and so is logically separate from a non-believing group (Acts 19:9). The Word of God is the solo authority and reason (Acts 2:40; Gal.1:8,9; 2Jn.1:10,11;3Jn.1:9-10).

5. There can be several area-wise churches in the same region (therefore, we read about "churches of Galatia"). However, the church in a city is always referred to in the singular, except in the case of 1Cor.14:34, which is an instruction to the Corinthian church but gives instruction to "churches", probably referring to "church meetings" as some translators paraphrase. It is probable and not unbiblical for the church at Corinth to have different church meetings at different localities of the city, especially if the number of believers was great and all of them could not be accommodated in the same place at the same time. Certainly, we don't expect that the number of believers gathered together in Mark's house to pray for Peter were all the thousands of believers in Jerusalem. Of course the church was praying (Acts 12:5); but, only some of them (perhaps, as many could fit in there as indicated by the word *hikanos* (sufficient) used there for "many") were at the house of Mark (Acts 12:12).

6. If there is a truly believing community already in a place, the true apostle will never go and try to establish another denomination there, though he would love to visit that church; his goal is to reach out to places where Christ is not named (Rom.1:10-12; 15:20,22,23) (Acts 19:1; 11:22-24, 25-27).

7. Jesus warns churches that fail to keep themselves alive in His truth and love (Rev.2:5,16,20-23;3:2,3, 16,19)

8. Numerical growth is visibly observed in the local churches (Acts 9:31; 16:5).

9. Being excommunicated by a tyrannical leader doesn't divide the local church. They may be forced to gather in a different place; but, the congregation is still one.(3Jn.1:9-10). Note that John says that he would come and deal with the situation. He had earlier written to the church, but the tyrannical Diotrephes was turning him off. So, he writes to another elder, Gaius. The solution was not division, but discipline.

Relationship between Local Churches

1. The churches in different locations are spiritually connected to each other (Rom.16:16)

2. Customs in the local churches in general become exemplary for particular churches (1Cor.11:16)

3. Experiences in the local churches in general become exemplary for particular churches (1Cor.14:33)

4. Churches must follow the example of other local churches in sending support for other churches in need (1Cor.16:1; 2Cor.8:1,2)

5. Churches can choose someone as their messengers to travel to various other churches to appeal for help and carry aid to the needy churches (Acts 11:29,30; 2Cor.8:18,19,23).

6. Local churches help the apostles carry the gospel to the ends of the earth (2Cor.11:8)

7. Testimonies from a church are carried to other churches to testify of the grace of God (2Thess.1:4;Rom.1:8)

8. Churches must appeal to the final authority of the Word of God with regards to matters of doctrine and practice. In certain cases, approaching an apostle or a council of apostles and teachers is needed (Gal.1:8; Acts 15:1ff; 1Cor.7:1). However, the Bible has final authority on all matters (Acts 17:11).

Offices in the Local Church (Phil.1:1)

Elders/Pastors/Overseers (Bishops)/Teachers (Acts 14:23; Eph.4:11; 1Tim.5:17; Acts 15:6; 20:28;Tit.1:5,7,8,9; 1Tim.3:1-7). While these are appointed by the apostles or someone

sent by the apostle, it also seems possible that someone can aspire to be a bishop or a teacher (1Tim.3:1; James 3:1). They will give account to God and will receive stricter judgment (Heb.13:17; James 3:1).

Deacons (Acts 6:1ff; 1Tim.3:8-13)

Offices beyond the Local Church

Apostles (2Cor.11:28)

Prophets (Acts 21:10,11)

Evangelists (Acts 21:8)

Teachers (Acts 13:1; 1Cor.12:28)

A pastor's ministry goes beyond the local church when he ministers as apostle, prophet, evangelist as teacher; however, he is pastor only of the local church where God has appointed him.

A deacon's ministry goes beyond the church when he or she ministers as an evangelist or teacher.

A woman can only pastor along with her husband. If her husband is not pastor, she can be a counselor for younger women, but not pastor. However, a single woman can be a missionary.

Ministries in the Local Church (Rom.12:6-8)

Responsibilities of the Local Church (1Tim.5:3ff; James 1:27)

Local Church as a Missionary Church (Acts 13:1ff)

Places of Local Church Gathering

1. House of a believer (Acts 12:12; 1Cor.16:19)
2. Hall (Acts 19:9)
3. Any place where the church can gather to worship.

Worship Service of the Local Church

Reading of God's Word (1Tim.4:13)

Exhortation (1Tim.4:13; Rom.12:8;)

Teaching (1Tim.4:13)

Singing (1Cor.14:26; Col.3:16)

Prophesying (1Cor.14:5,24)

Communion of the Lord's Table (1Cor.11:23ff)

Testifying (Acts 14:27; 15:4)

Praying (1Tim.2:1,8)

Collecting offering (1Cor.16:2)

Modern evils

Denominationalism (1Cor.1:11-13)

Rivalry (Phil.1:15; 2Cor.10:10)

Commercialism (1Tim.6:5; 2Pet.2:15; Jer.6:13)

Exploitation (2Cor.11:20)

False gospels (2Cor.11:3,4,13,14; Gal.1:8; 2Tim.4:3)

Self-seeking (Phil.2:21)

Monopolization (3Jn.1:9,10)
Aristocracy (Gal.4:17; Matt.23:5-7, 8-10; James 2:1ff)

GREAT COMMANDMENT AND GREAT COMMISSION

The Great Commandment is God's command to every human to love God and love one another. The Great Commission is the Christ's commission to the Church to preach the Gospel to all nations.

The Great Commandment is the essential law of the church; the Great Commission is the missional task of the church. The both cannot be confused. To love is a rule and principle that would never cease to be; to preach is an obligation that will soon cease to be. That is one reason why caring for the poor, the orphans, and the widows is considered to be pure religion (James 1:27). The liberational causes and the cause of justice and mercy are principle causes – things that the church cannot silently ignore when it has the power not to ignore. To love one's neighbor as oneself is an essential obligation. In most cases, one may not preach but still be a Christian, and draw others through a silent conformity to the essential Christian principle of love (1Peter 3:1). Being precedes manifestation.

The ethical rule must not be confused with the ecclesiastical task. To love is not a task; it is an essential principle. Jesus said that His disciples will be known by the love they have for one another (John 13:35). To love is not a mission that Jesus has committed to the church – to take care of the poor, orphans, and widows was a moral obligation required even in the Old Testament....

The ecclesiastical task must flow out of the essential ethic. Love is the motive of evangelism; evangelism is not the motive of love. The messenger cannot shirk off his essential obligation to love and merely preach the Gospel for the sake of a job to be done. Jesus considered the caring responses of the Good Samaritan as more important than the temple services of the Levite and the priest. The essential obligation to love was more important than even the ecclesiastical office. In essence, one evangelizes because and out of love; one doesn't love in order to evangelize. Therefore, social service with the aim of evangelization is hypocrisy. However, where evangelism exists, social service is bound to co-exist.

To posit the principle of operation as the goal of the operation is a confusion of identity. Love is the principle of which evangelization is only a time-bound goal – though covering eternity. Certainly, there are also things other than evangelization that the principle of love, commanded under the new covenant, covers. However, evangelization is core outreach of the principle of love, for it aims at an everlasting result – the salvation of persons. As such it is the essential concern of being (against death for life) in opposition to the temporal concerns of the secular. Evangelization answers the ultimate existential concern of being-towards-life.

The task only exists because the law of being is violated. Mission exists because love is confused. Therefore, reconciliation is the prime goal. Spiritual reconciliation is lame where the pictures of equality, equity, compassion, and justice are not concretely visible. The mission lies lame because the law of being remains violated (both vertically towards God and horizontally towards fellow humans). Love towards God is the attitude and act of glorifying God; it follows love of one's neighbor (brother and sister) as oneself (1John 4:20-21).

AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH

The Greek word for authority is *exousia* and the word for power is *dunamis*.

Authority and power go together. Authority is backed by power. Authority uses and releases power.

1. Jesus had authority over diseases; but, He healed by the power of God (Luke 5:17; Mark 5:30).
2. Power is tangible; authority is official (Mark 5:30; Acts 4:31)
3. One can be filled with power; but, authority is delegated (Acts 6:8)
4. Faith releases the power of God (Eph.1:17,18,19; Mark 5:30; 9:23)

However, power of authority in politics differs from power of authority in the church and elsewhere. There is no authority greater than God since there is no power greater than God's - He is the Supreme Almighty.

1. Political authority uses physical power and force to enforce the law and execute justice (Matt.20:25; Rom.13:3-6)
2. Church authority has been given spiritual power to battle against spiritual forces of wickedness, to flash God's light, and to exercise the discipline of godliness in the Church (Luke 9:1; 10:19; 2Cor.10:4; Eph.6:10ff; 2Pet.1:3; Eph.3:20).

Those who have received Jesus in their lives have the authority to be called the children of God. They have God's authority given to them as sons of God.

Anointing and authority are related. Anointing to an office gives authority of the office.

In the OT, priests were anointed to intercede for and to teach people the difference between good and evil. The church has the priestly anointing for intercession and to uphold the word of God (1Pet 2:9; 1Tim.2:1-4; Phil.2:15,16). Kings were anointed to lead, govern, protect, and give justice to people. The church is a royal priesthood and children of God are appointed as kings in God's kingdom with authority over all the powers of the devil and his kingdom (Rev.1:6; 5:10; Luke 10:19). They will judge angels in the kingdom to come (1Cor.6:2-3). In the OT, prophets were anointed to testify for God. In NT, the church is witness of Christ (Rev.19:10).

The church has authority in Jesus Name

1. In doctrine - To preach the Gospel and uphold the truth of God (Matt.28:18-20; 1Tim.3:15)
2. On earth and in heaven - to bind and to loose (Matt.18:18)
3. Over diseases and death - To heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead (Matt.10:8)
4. Over demons (serpents and scorpions) - To tread over them and to cast them out (Luke 10:19)
5. Over nature and situations (mountains, trees, creatures) (Mark 11:23; Matt.21:20; Mark 16:18)
6. To pray and receive (John 15:16; 16:24,26)
 - a. To pray for the people of God for their protection and for spiritual victories (Eph.6:18; 2Thess.3:1; Heb.13:18)

- b. To pray for all men (1Tim.2:1)
 - c. To pray for political rulers and change political history (1Tim.2:2)
 - d. To pray to receive what they need from God's resources provided for them
7. To forgive or retain sins of people against them (John 20:23; 2Cor.2:7)
 8. To appoint people to office in the church and serve each other in submission, love, and humility (Matt.20:25,26; Tit.1:5)
 9. For discipline in the Church (1Cor.5:4,5,11; 4:21)
 10. For the execution of God-given responsibilities in the world (Mark 13:34)
 11. God-given authority in the Church must be honored (Heb.13:7,17; Jude 1:8)
 12. Church authority is pastoral, servant-minded, and ruled by love (1Pet.5:2,3,4).

God will entrust more authority in the age to come to the one who is faithful to fruitfully use all the authority given to him/her here on earth today (Luke 19:17)

APOSTLE

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4:11)

The apostle is a gift given by Jesus Christ to the Church. Apostleship is a calling. There is a belief that the office of apostleship discontinued with the 12 apostles. However, the Bible doesn't teach that.

The 12 Apostles

The 12 apostles (with Mattias as the 12th in place of Judas) were foundational to the early Church. The Bible tells us that the Church is founded on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the Chief Cornerstone. (Eph 2:20)

Therefore, faithfulness of the church was judged by their faithfulness to the apostles' doctrine. (Act 2:42; 2Pe 3:2; Jud 1:17).

The 12 apostles along with the elders (among whom was James, the brother of Jesus) at Jerusalem had authoritative position in all matters of doctrine pertaining to the Church universal (Acts 15:2,4,6,22).

Though Paul and Barnabas were apostles who were first sent from Antioch, where they returned and remained, they came to Jerusalem when the dissension arose.

When Philip preached in Samaria, it was the apostles from Jerusalem who came and established things there (See Acts 8).

Paul, Barnabas, Silas and others

We read of Paul, Barnabas, and Silas are called prophets and teachers in Acts 13:1.

But, after the church had prayed for them and sent them according to the will of the Holy Spirit, they are referred to as apostles (Acts 14:4,14).

Paul makes it clear that an apostle is not ordained by any church. One cannot be ordained as

an apostle. An apostle is Christ's gift to the Church (Eph.4:11; Gal.1:1).

He refers himself as an apostle many times and talks of himself as an apostle to the Gentiles (Rom.11:13). He also talks about the signs of an apostle (2Cor.12:12).

The fact that the 12 Apostles were with Jesus didn't give them supremacy over Paul. But, they perceived the grace that Christ had given to Paul. (Gal.2:6,7,9; Rom.1:5). The Church is not an organization with a hierarchical structure. We are not bound in one administrative structure; but, we are bound together in one Body, one Spirit, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all (Eph.4:4-6). Jesus made it clear to His disciples that He wasn't interested in a human organization (Mark 9:38-40).

Who is an Apostle?

An apostle is neither someone who claims by himself to be an apostle nor a title that someone can assume. It is a calling and the true apostle shall be known by their fruits (2Co 11:13-15).

How was Paul able to discern these as false apostles? Of course, by their fruits, their works. They were "deceitful workers".

In contrast, we see the work style of Paul as a true apostle:

For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit. But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts. For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness—God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe. (1Thess 2:3-10)

1. An apostle is someone sent (Gk. *apostolos*) by Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit to bear witness of Him (Matt 28:18ff; Acts 1:8; 13:1-3; Gal.1:16). In Paul and Barnabbas' case, the Holy Spirit asked the church to separate them to Him Paul and Barnabbas to the work that He had called them to. The calling and the anointing preceded their being separated and sent by the church. (Gal.1:15; Rom.1:1; 2Cor.1:21). The church was only instrumental in sending them away, with prayer, fasting, and laying on of hands, through the Holy Spirit. The church didn't ordain them as apostles; the Holy Spirit called them as such.

2. An apostle possesses apostolic authority (Acts 5; 2Cor 13:10).

3. An apostle preaches the Gospel with the demonstration of power (2Co 12:12; 1Cor.2:4,5; Heb 2:3,4).

4. An apostle lays, with the authority of Christ, the foundation of a church through the expounding of the Gospel, the establishment of faith, doctrine, and order in the church (Eph 2:20; Act 15:41; Rom 15:20; 1Co 3:10,11; Heb 6:1-2). He may remain in a place for a very long time till the church there is fully established and till the Holy Spirit wishes him to move.

5. An apostle has the authority of a spiritual father over those who have been established in faith through him. He is the one whom the church imitates. (1Co 4:15-16). In that area, he is more important than ten thousand instructors or teachers who come and go.

6. An apostle has concern for the local churches (not one but many that he has founded)

(2Co 11:28).

7. The apostle is known by his works. His work is the seal of his apostleship (1Co 9:1,2; 2Co 3:1-3).

8. Apostles represent churches for issues and needs that pertain to all churches (Acts 13:1-3; 14:27-28; 15:2,4,5,6)

Authority of an Apostle

1. To appoint elders in the churches (Acts 14:23)
2. To address problems in a local church that the church is failing to handle (1Co.1:10,11; Phil.4:1)
3. To execute discipline regarding moral issues in the church (Acts 5:1-11; 1Co.4:21; 2Co.13:10)
4. To authorize churches to execute discipline in the absence of the apostle (1Co.5:3-5)
5. To answer doctrinal questions of a local church and to prescribe rules (1Co.7:1,17; 8:1)
6. To charge the churches and individuals in office to do things important for the body of Christ (1Thess.5:27; 1Tim.1:3,18; 5:21; 2Tim.4:1,2)
7. To appoint and send trustworthy individuals to oversee local churches in a geographical area for growth, health, and proper order (Tit.1:5; 1Tim.3:1ff; Phil.2:19,25,29).
8. To give instructions for certain matters of contextual significance (the instructions are not universally applicable universally) (1Co.7:12, 25).
9. To receive financial support for ministry (but, not to charge them more than is proper) (2Co.11:8; Phil.4:15-18; 2Thess.3:8-9)
10. To instruct the churches regarding collection of offerings (1Co.16:1,2).
11. To confront those who oppose the message of the Gospel (Acts 13:8-11; Tit.1:11)
12. To receive reports from churches established by the apostle (Phil.2:19; 1Co.1:11; 5:1)
13. To receive and handle freewill contributions for all saints (Acts 4:35,37)
14. To be entrusted with funds for the saints who are in need (2Co.8:1-4, 19; 9:12,13).
15. To deal with leadership problems in the church (3Jn.1:9-10)

Note:

--An apostle has no authority over the faith of any believer (2Co.1:24)

--Apostles are not above the elders in the local church where they belong (Acts 15:6,7,13,22)

TEST OF PROPHETS

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. (1John 4:1 NKJ)

Test #1: Fulfillment of Prophecy

"And if you say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?'-- when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him." (Deu 18:21-22 NKJ)

Test #2: Right Theology - The one that teaches fear of the Lord

"If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, 'and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods'-- which you have not known-- and let us serve them, 'you shall not listen to the

words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. (Deu 13:1-4 NKJ)

"By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world." (1Jo 4:2-3 NKJ)

"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction." (2Pe 2:1 NKJ)

Test #3: Fruits, Actions

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. "You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.' (Mat 7:15-20 NKJ)

WHAT ARE NOT TESTS OF PROPHET

1. Prophesying in God's Name

"And the LORD said to me, "The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart. (Jer 14:14 NKJ)

"Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' (Mat 7:22-23 NKJ)

Not everyone who claims to be a Christian theologian/minister/teacher is a Christian.

2. Signs and Wonders

"For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. (Mat 24:24 NKJ)

3. Show of Spirituality & Meekness

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. (Mat 7:15 NKJ)

"And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works." (2Co 11:14-15 NKJ)

BAPTISM

Baptism literally means "immersion" and "submersion". The picture usually is of a vessel immersed in water to clean it thoroughly.

5 Kinds of Baptisms

1. Baptism of Repentance (Mark 1:4; Acts 19:4)
2. Baptism of Regeneration, Resurrection, or New Life (Rom.6:4; Col.2:12; 1Pet.3:21)
3. Baptism of Suffering, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus (Luke 12:5)
4. Baptism of the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:8; Acts 1:5)
5. Baptism of Fire (Matt.3:11, i.e. judgment, Luke 3:17)

4 Dispensations of Baptism

1. The Age of Human Government - Noah and his family were baptized into a covenant of the promise of life (1Pet.3:21; Gen.9:13-16)
2. The Age of Law - The children of Israel were baptized into Moses (1Cor.10:2)
3. The Time of John - People were baptized into John's baptism (Acts 19:3)
4. The Age of the Church - Believers are baptized into Christ (Rom.6:3; 1Cor.12:13; Gal.3:27)

3 Baptizers

1. John the Baptist baptized with the baptism of repentance (Matt.3:1,2; Mark 1:4)
2. The Spirit baptizes us into Christ (1Cor.12:13)
3. Jesus baptizes us with the Holy Spirit (Matt.3:11; Acts 1:5)

Water Baptism

Baptism literally means "immersion" and "submersion". The picture usually is of a vessel immersed in water to clean it thoroughly. In the New Testament, water baptism is an important step to discipleship. Belief in Jesus Christ and baptism go hand in hand. While faith is related to believing in the heart, baptism is associated with our public confession of that faith (Rom. 10:10; Matt. 3:6; 1Pet.3:21). Jesus instituted baptism as the ordinance of initiation into discipleship. Anyone who wishes to publicly confess and accept Jesus Christ as his/her Savior and Lord and declare that he/she is disciple of Jesus Christ partakes of baptism.

Baptism means:

1. According to Romans 6. **Identifying with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.** When one goes under water, it shows he/she is dead to his/her old life of sin. When one comes out of water, it shows a new life in Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:3; Col.2:12).
2. According to Matthew 28:19ff. **Initiation into discipleship.** "making disciples.. baptising them.."
3. According to Mark 16:16. **It goes along with faith in Jesus Christ.** All who believe in Him take water baptism.

Baptism entails:

1. Obedience to Faith
2. Obedience to Counsel of God (Luke 7:30)

Mode of Baptism: Immersion in water. Symbolizes death, burial, and resurrection. The word "baptizo" in Greek itself means washing by immersion.

Formula: In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. "In the Name of Jesus" has been used in the New Testament to distinguish the baptism of Jesus from other baptisms (e.g. Jewish proselytisms and John's baptism).

Receipient: All who believe (anyone who can believe can be baptised). But, baptism before belief is not baptism (for example, an infant doesn't know what belief is or baptism is). (Mark 16:16). Even those who had taken the baptism of John had to be rebaptized in the Name of Jesus (Acts 19:3-5).

New Testament Baptism is an Antitype of:

1. The salvation of Noah and his family in the ark during the flood (1Pet. 3:21)
2. The Israelites passing through the Red Sea after being delivered from Egypt (1Cor. 10:1,2)

What Baptism Accomplishes

1. Death to sin and death (Rom.6:8-11)
2. Rising up to newness of life (Rom. 6:4)
3. Putting on Christ (Gal.3:27)
4. Answer of a good conscience (1Pet.3:21)

LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord's Supper or Communion of the Lord's Table is the corporate participation of the Church in the body and blood of Jesus Christ symbolized by the bread and the wine on the Table of Communion. It is the meal of communion in the New Covenant that Jesus brought into force through His death.

Communion of the Lord's Table Symbolizes

1. The unity of the Body of Christ (1Cor.10:17)
2. The breaking of the Body of Christ as a sacrifice for our sins (1Cor.11:24)
3. The shedding of the Blood of Jesus for the remission of our sins (1Cor.11:25)
4. The death of Jesus that brought the New Covenant to effect (Heb.9:16,17)

3 Pointers of the Lord's Table (1Cor.11:26)

The Lord's Table points us to:

1. Our Past Roots – The Cross of Christ, His Death and Resurrection
2. Our Present Responsibility - To Proclaim His Death and Resurrection.
3. Christ's Future Return – Till He Comes Back

Questions and Answers Related to the Lord's Supper

Is the Lord's Supper the same as the Passover?

No, it is not. The Passover was a Jewish feast that was, and is still, celebrated among the Jews to commemorate their deliverance from Egypt. It was instituted by Moses and was celebrated once in a year. The Lord's Supper, however, was instituted by Jesus and as the symbol of His Covenant with us. It can be observed as often as the Church of the Lord at a place comes together to remember Him and proclaim His death.

"...do this in remembrance of Me."

"This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

"For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (1Cor. 11:24,25,26)

Who can eat of the Lord's Supper?

Someone with the following qualifications:

1. One who is part of the believing community (the Church); i.e. someone who can "come together as a church" (1Cor.11:18).
2. One who can remember the Lord; i.e. who has a personal relationship with the Lord and has identified with His sacrificial death (1Cor.11:24).
3. One who can proclaim or testify of or speak and teach about the Lord's death; i.e. someone who understands the doctrine of atonement and knows that he is saved so that he speaks not from mental knowledge but from experiential understanding (1Cor.11:26)
4. One who can have and has reverence for the Lord's Table; so that he can eat in a reverent manner (1Cor.11:27).
5. One who is not an infant or of such age in which he doesn't know the difference between good and evil; one who can have a legally responsible status so that "guiltiness" and "justification" are terms applicable to him (1Cor.11:27).
6. One who has examined himself (1Cor.11:28).
7. One who can discern the Lord's body (1Cor.11:29).

Is baptism for the remission of sins necessary before one can partake of the Lord's Supper?

Yes, it is. For, without the baptism for the remission of sins one cannot be a disciple of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ ordained these two ordinances for the Church: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. One cannot partake of the table and of the Body of the Lord unless one is first washed already.

Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!"

Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean..." (John 13:8-10)

An example of the sequence is given here:

*all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,
all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. (1Cor 10:2-4)*

Can children partake of the Lord's Supper?

If the child fulfills the above qualifications, is of discerning age, has reverence, and is baptized and living a worthy life of a believer.

In response to those who contend that the children of believing parents are already part of the Covenant by birth, even as the Jewish children were part of the Covenant by birth, it must be said that

1. The Jewish children only become part of the Old Covenant through circumcision and not without it.
2. No one is saved or born again except through personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and obedience to the Faith. The analogy applies, A child born in a garage is not born a mechanic.

Where should the Lord's Supper be eaten?

1. Wherever the Church can come together in one place for fellowship as a church (1Cor.11:18,20,22).
2. It implies (for the term "as a Church" is used) where the leadership (elders, deacons) is present.

Can it be eaten at one's own home apart from the general fellowship?

In exceptional cases, for example in a place where there are no Christians except only one family. However, where there is more than one believing family, the principle of "coming together" is binding and must not be neglected; because the Bread talks about the unity of the Body of Christ. No element of division or pretence of special approval from God is permitted in the Body of Christ (1Cor.11:18,19). One must learn to "wait" for the other (1Cor.11:21). All this implies that the Lord's Table is not something that is meant for personal home practice but is an ordinance for the believing community as a whole in one place. Therefore, the Bible says,

Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? [Which means that the Lord's Supper was not eaten personally at homes] Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not! (1Cor.11:22)

The Lord's Table is the place where believers, whether they are rich or poor, come and have an equal share. It is the Lord's Table and is established for the believing community as a whole.

How often should the Lord's Supper be eaten?

As often as the Church can come together as a Church; and it is possible that the ordinance be observed.

In the New Testament times, the Church used to gather on the first day of the week (Sunday).

"Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread..." (Acts 20:7; see also 1Cor.16:2 for Sunday gathering)

Is the Lord's Supper meant for healing of body?

With regard to healing, the Bible specifies that

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. (James 5:14-16)

If someone has sinned against the Lord's Table and so is sick due to the Lord's chastening, then he can call for the elders of the Church and confess and be prayed for.

But, nowhere does the Bible teach that the Lord's Supper is for healing of the body. It is only an ordinance in remembrance and proclamation of the death of our Lord for our sins. It is one thing if the Lord chooses to heal someone through his/her partaking of the table; but it is sinful to try to treat the sacred bread and wine like some kind of magical symbol to health and happiness. The Bible has only commanded prayer, confession of sins, anointing with oil, and laying on of hands for healing. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are not for the purpose of physical healing, but because of one's identity with the Lord in His death and resurrection.

Is the Lord's Supper meant for salvation?

No, it is for those who are saved and sanctified by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Does the bread become flesh and the wine become the blood of Jesus?

No, they are only symbols of His flesh and His blood. And, so, they must be treated as His flesh and His blood. Thus, though, physically, one is partaking of the bread and the wine, the communion is not physical but is spiritual and one is partaking of the Body of Christ, spiritually speaking.

What do the bread and the wine signify?

The Bread signifies the Body of the Lord and the Wine signifies His Blood. They together signify the New Covenant that the Lord made with the Church,

A Covenant which He made by His sacrificial death on the cross.

A Covenant that forever blots out all sins and writes of the Law against us.

A Covenant that forever abolishes the old system of sacrifices and observances of the Old Covenant.

A Covenant that brings Eternal Life, and Eternal Inheritance in heaven.

A Covenant that breaks down all walls of barriers between the Jew and the Gentiles and brings all together to God in the one Body.

Can rice and tea be used instead of bread and wine?

No, Biblical symbols cannot be replaced.

Can Rice Bread (made from rice flour) be used instead of Wheat Bread?

The Bible doesn't specify what kind of grain should be used for making the bread. The Greek word *artos* usually was used for barley-bread which was the poor man's bread. I don't yet find any reason why rice bread cannot be used as long as the bread is a whole symbolizing unity of the body.

Who is authorized to administer the Lord's Supper? Can anyone, any believer, administer that?

At the first Lord's Supper, it was Jesus who broke bread and gave it to the disciples.

In Acts 20:11 we read of Paul who broke bread on the first day of the week at Troas.

Paul's statement in 1Corinthians 11:23 implies that he used to break the bread among them:

"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you.."

So, it is obvious that an elder appointed by the Lord as overseer of the local flock is supposed to lead the observance of the ordinance.

A glimpse into the Early Church practice of the Lord's Supper is obtained from Justin Martyr

who lived between 103-165 AD; in his First Apology, he wrote:

Chap. LXV.—Administration of the Sacraments. But we, after we have thus washed him who has been convinced and has assented to our teaching, bring him to the place where those who are called brethren are assembled, in order that we may offer hearty prayers in common for ourselves and for the baptized [illuminated] person, and for all others in every place, that we may be counted worthy, now that we have learned the truth, by our works also to be found good citizens and keepers of the commandments, so that we may be saved with an everlasting salvation. Having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss. There is then brought to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water; and he taking them, gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands. And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying Amen. This word Amen answers in the Hebrew language to *yévoiro* [so be it]. And when the president has given thanks, and all the people have expressed their assent, those who are called by us deacons give to each of those present to partake of the bread and wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving was pronounced, and to those who are absent they carry away a portion.

Chap. LXVI.—Of the Eucharist. And this food is called among us *Εὐχαριστία* [the Eucharist], of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh. For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, "This do ye in remembrance of Me, (Luke 22:19) this is My body;" and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, "This is My blood;" and gave it to them alone.

Three Pointers of the Communion Table

"For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes." (1Cor. 11:26)

The Lord's Table points us to:

- 1. Our Past Roots** - The Cross of Christ, His Death and Resurrection
- 2. Our Present Responsibility** - To Proclaim His Death and Resurrection.
- 3. Christ's Future Return** - Till He Comes Back

CHOIR

The choir of Solomon's Temple was massive, elegant, very professional, dedicated, and provided strong leadership in worship through composing songs, music (various tunes as mentioned in the titles of the psalms). (2Chr.5:12; 1Chr.23:3; 1Chr.25:7), and leading the worship. It is understood that there were a total of 288 singers and 4000 musicians, each divided into 12 courses; so that, for each course there would be 12 singers and 160 accompanying musicians.

In the New Testament, a massive temple-format is not seen. However, the worship service is commanded to be an ordered event, not a disordered one (1Cor.14:33). In massive events, the role of a choir to lead the Church in worship cannot be disregarded as God doesn't see the choir as disruptive of His glory but only glorifying Him (2Chr.5:13,14). Every act of worship must be done to strengthen the church (1Cor.14:26).

Some Qualifications of the Choir

1. They should have the calling and anointing for worship (Acts 6:3; 1Chronicles 25). Unless they have the calling, they cannot have dedication for service.
2. They should be obedient to the Choir leader (1Chr.25:6)
3. They must be submissive to the Church authority (1Chr.25:6)
4. They must be trained and skillful in singing and/or in playing different instruments (1Chr.25:7)
5. They must be instructed in the songs of the Lord (not attracted by worldly music) (1Chr.25:7).
6. They must be dedicated to the service of the House of the Lord (1Chr. 25:6). When it comes to Church ministry, availability is important and signifies dedication (1Chr.9:33).
7. They should be full of joy and enthusiasm (1Chr.15:16).
8. They should have discipline in dress, posture, and order (2Chr.5:12)
9. They can be both male and female together (Ezra 2:65)
10. They must be filled with the Spirit of God (Eph. 5:18,19).
11. They should sing with grace in heart (Col.3:16).
12. The musicians and the singers must play and sing in harmony (2Chr.5:13)
13. The singing and playing must strengthen worship, not disturb it (2Chr.29:28)

CHURCH EDUCATION

One must be careful before making any blanket statement about the state of teaching ministry in the church; for certainly there are churches that emphasize on teaching and there are churches that emphasize other things such as evangelism, worship, holiness, or social service. So, let me take a more general approach and leave it to the reader to consider if the necessary emphasis on teaching exists in his context or not; and, if not, what he or she can do to bring it to the front.

The Ministry of the Word in Historical Retrospective

For the Apostles, the ministry of the Word had no substitute. When the early church fell into a controversy related to food-serving, the Apostles drew a very clear line of definition around their calling. They were marked off by God not to serve tables but to the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:2); not that they were not willing to serve tables when needed (John 13:14), but because they were not supposed to let go off the priority of the ministry of the Word for anything else in the Body of Christ. One of the most important reasons for this was that **doctrine and discipleship belonged together**. The Great Commission was about discipleship and teaching (Matt.28:18-20). So, it is not a surprise that ability to teach was an important qualification for someone aspiring to be a leader in the church (1Tim.3:2; Tit.1:9).

As history progressed, or digressed, the Word began to lose its prominence in the church and gradually was secluded to new structures called the monasteries. Also, undue importance was being given to non-revelatory influences such as Aristotelianism in the line of Scholasticism. Martin Luther (1483-1546) didn't favor such emphases and wished for the purity of theological education. During the Reformation, training of the clergy became an important issue as Protestant clergymen were required to be experts in the languages, especially the biblical ones, and possess tools and keen abilities for interpretation of texts, for reasoning, and for countering the opposition of the Catholics. Consequently, **a Protestant clergyman was considered to be the most educated person in the village during those times**. The Catholics saw the threat and responded with the Council of Trent establishing the innovation of theological seminaries dedicated solely to theological training (See George Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*).

But, soon the spirit of liberty and protest fell prostrate before the skeptic influences of modernism and liberalism. The Enlightenment did infuse a hope of utopia, but it was a very humanist one, so much that the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) predicted that this utopia could only be obtained through the murder of God and freedom from the Christian doctrine of moral absolutes. In his *Parable of the Madman*, he pronounced that God was dead and was being buried in the churches. It was not a matter of surprise that churches in Europe began to get empty.

But, that was not the story everywhere. In England and in America, revivalism was breaking out with stronger emphasis on faith and scripture. Men like John Wesley (1703-1791), Charles Finney (1792-1875), and Evan Roberts (1878-1951) spearheaded movements emphasizing deep experiences with God. The Missionary Era also began with William Carey (1761-1834) sailing towards India and setting up a base from where began a prolific movement of Bible translation into the vernacular languages. Missionaries gave themselves to inventing scripts for languages that had no script so that the locals could read God's Word in their own languages. Also, a few seminaries were set up for the training of church workers. But, not even these were immune to the attraction of the secular powers (universities) that had already begun to renounce theology as the queen of the sciences and had turned to scientism instead. Some began to jokingly talk about seminaries as cemeteries.

Again, it is not proper to make a blanket statement about the global Church. The early part of the 20th century already witnessed the Pentecostal outpouring and revivals in Azusa Street. Movements began to separate from the mainline denominations and newer training centers, though little ones, began to emerge with strong emphasis on faith, grace, and scripture. Indigenous movements also sprung up with rigorous emphasis on Bible study in the church. It is not right to say that the church was devoid of teaching material. The turn of the 21st century witnessed a surge of teaching ministries all over the world that produced incredible amount of media and literature on understanding scriptures. What might not have been met by resources at the local church level was being met by ministries serving globally. It also became the age of radio and television. One key instrument encouraged at the local church level was the institution of the Sunday School. Of course, the temptation could be for parents to forego to the church their responsibility of spiritually nurturing their children; but, the Sunday School (wherever it could be possible) did serve in the area of teaching.

Modern Church Education

In modern times, we are flooded with teaching material all around. There is an abundance of magazines, journals, books, television programs, CDs, VCDs, and an almost infinite resource of information on the internet that inundates the globe. Of course, there is one drawback that a larger amount of the material is in the English language. However, one cannot deny the fact that there are people from almost every major linguistic group who can access these materials and pass it on to others in their group through various means of communication. Another drawback could be the abundance of heresies also prevailing. This is where the two-edged training of church leaders as well as training of congregations to follow **the Berean model of evaluating teaching** must come into place (Acts 17:11). In some countries (especially the non-secular or extreme-secular ones), training of leaders is not very feasible. However, training of congregations is not impossible. In fact, in modern times there is a great need for emphasis upon the education of the lay with theological tools necessary for the interpretation and application of scripture. In response, there are also a number of faithful attempts by reputed theological institutions offering courses by distance (or modular) mode to meet this growing need. Again, it is not a thing unseen that trained leaders also sometimes fall to the trap of cheap

degrees offered by fake institutions and lead their church members into the same error. The lure for the easy doctorate and the dilution of education principles is a huge problem. The lure is severe when prominent leaders fall into the snare. At the couple of colleges where I serve, we make it a serious priority to sift the chaff from the grain, to standardize education, and to set up a model for others to follow.

There is certainly no substitute for a theologically educated church. A church that boasts of highly educated laity but cannot boast of a theologically educated laity makes a very poor show of performance. To be useful to the world and be highly in demand of the world is one thing; the more significant thing is to be useful in the hands of the Master. **A church that is biblically illiterate is an example of poor church government.** Modern secular governments emphasize on the right to education of all citizens and make provisions for the same. How much more shouldn't the church emphasize on **the right to education of all Christians** and also make provision for the same? We must not forget Christ's injunction that loving Him implies feeding His sheep (John 21:17).

Steps To Emphasize Upon Church Education

While a number of possible methods can be employed, a few are suggested below:

- **The 2 Timothy 2:2 Model:** In 2Timothy 2:2, Paul instructs Timothy to pass on what he has learnt from Paul to faithful men who would be able to pass it on to others. This is a four generational model of impartational learning: (a) Paul to (b) Timothy to (c) Faithful Men to (d) Others. Church elders must become mentors of young people in their congregation (Tit.2:2-8). In fact, there is nothing more illustrious than faith that is passed from one generation to the other (2Tim.1:5).
- **Doctrine and Good Works:** In his pastoral epistles, Paul again and again emphasizes on the connection between sound doctrine and good works. In fact, the absence of good works is equal to a denial of faith and blasphemy of doctrine (1Tim.6:1; Tit.1:16; 1Tim.5:8). One must not forget that the one act of the Good Samaritan had more lessons to teach about the principle of love than a hundred hours of teaching delivered in the temple by the priest who passed by the injured man that day.
- **Connecting with Seminary:** There is nothing more helpful in this regard than connecting one's church with a seminary for mutual benefit. A church can support theological education in a seminary as well as benefit from the services of the seminary. Some possible areas of connection could be hosting students for practical ministry in the church, sponsoring candidates, sponsoring seminary development, promoting theological learning at the church by encouraging lay to take up courses at the seminary, forwarding theological disputes to seminary panels for solutions (Acts 15:2), attending seminars at the seminary, etc.
- **Promoting Good Christian Literature and Media:** Though it may not be helpful for every church to have a book stall or a library (but, if it's possible, it is highly recommended), subscription to certain teaching magazines can be promoted in the church. Also, it will be highly good to encourage gift subscriptions and the passing on of read materials to others. Again, the Berean model is highly recommended here for evaluation of soundness in biblical teaching.
- **Regular Bible Study Hours:** Usually, these in-week hours cannot be attended by everyone in the church, which should not be lamentable seeing that variety of jobs cannot always agree on a common time. However, it is strongly advisable to maintain a weekly Bible Study Class in the church or in a house (life, cell) group gathering of believers in an area. It is recommended that each Bible Study include the study of biblical doctrines, biblical characters, life principles, and times of meditation and discussion. No godless chatter or disputes must be allowed in such classes (1Tim.1:3,4; 6:3-5; 20; Tit.2:1; Eph.5:3,4,19,20).

- **Homilies:** The pastor must not just focus on the emotional needs of the congregation; he must also focus on the spiritual and the intellectual needs of them. A sermon charged with emotion will evoke applause, laughter, and tears; but, these responses will die away like a flame devoid of fuel. However, a wholesome sermon (message) will be intellectually understandable (1Cor.14:19), spiritually empowered (Acts 1:8; 1Cor.2:4), and practically compelling (Acts 2:37).
- **Children's and Youth Clubs:** A host of literature and media programs are available, particularly designed for the young ones. Modern missiologists have understood the importance of kids who fall in the 4-14 Age Window. The advertisers target them, the secular forces target them; but, the church often remains indifferent. We will lose them if we don't reach out to them. It is important that churches have faith-empowering programs and ministry opportunities for the young ones. The areas of monthly involvement could be as varied as Christian arts, worship, graphic designing, community development, social outreach and charity, construction programs, drama, prayer events, and a whole array of possible involvement areas.

Of course, the list above is minimal. But, it is hoped that it will provide enough impetus for any church to grow organically "into Him who is the head-- Christ-- from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. (Eph. 4:15-16).

POLITICS

IS THE IDEA OF A CHRISTIAN NATION BIBLICAL?

Jesus made a distinction between what belonged to Caesar and what belonged to God (Matt.22:21). He also spoke of His Kingdom as "not of this world" (Jn. 18:36). The New Testament clearly marks off the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of man as two separate realms. Of course, even in the kingdom of man, political authority ultimately comes from God (Rom.13:1,2). But, that doesn't certainly make politics "Christian". For instance, Nebuchadnezzar's authority came from God (Dan.2:37), but that didn't make his kingdom a Christian kingdom or his way of doing politics "Christian". Similarly, Cyrus was called the "anointed" of God (Isa.45:1), but that didn't make the Medo-Persian empire Christian.

It is always a threat to both politics and religion to fuse both of them together: not only do the people suffer, but they lose their freedom of religion as well. It doesn't matter which religion it may be, the loss of liberty is certain and when liberty is lost, politics loses a fundamental pillar.

Let's say, for instance, a "Christian nation". The next question would be "Catholic" or "Protestant"? History is not silent about the fact that whenever one of the traditions came to power, the other suffered. But, again, it's not just limited to "Catholic" or "Protestant". The same is the case also with, say an "Islamic nation". The next question would be "Shia" or "Sunni"? Again, say a "Buddhist nation". The next question would be "Theravada or Mahayana". And, one is aware what ramifications that has. Religion and state simply cannot ensure liberty. Not that liberty is lawless; but, when religion is enforced it loses its religious spirit.

"But, what about Jewish nationalism in the Old Testament?" one may ask. Clearly, there religion and state look indivisible. Jewish nationalism certainly was an issue when the Jews asked the question about whether it was right to render taxes to Caesar or not. Jesus' answer was that one must render what was due to the other, in this case what belonged to Caesar must be rendered to Caesar (Rom.13:7). In other words, it didn't matter what religious or ideological affiliation a state may have, religion and politics were still separate. Even in the Old Testament, there is a case when a king was struck with leprosy when he tried to mix up the two realms of authority (2Chr.16:18); also, there is a case where the monarch interfered in a religious matter when it became a political issue (1Kgs.2:27).

There will always be some ideological or religious/theological approach to politics. It is impossible for politics to be scientific, after all. Even science cannot be segregated from philosophy (much to the chagrin of the logical positivists or the 50s era); we do have a discipline called "Philosophy of Science". The logical positivists thought philosophy died under the sword of science, without considering the fact that science was still a servant to philosophy; it did what ideologies such as communism, humanism, or some religion said. Science provided the weapons, but ideologies decided how to (or whether to) use them.

Thus, it was possible for Daniel to offer a Biblical perspective of history and politics to Nebuchadnezzar while still serving as a servant in the Babylonian kingdom (Dan.2:37,39). His theology of politics didn't prevent him from involvement in politics; however, when a law made by the king conflicted with his theology, he chose to abide true to faith (Dan.6:7,10). But, in no way did he try to impose religion upon the state. He knew the Kingdom of God would come, but it was not going to be by any human hands (Dan.2:34,45). To Daniel, a proper biblical theology of politics and theology of history strongly conformed to the doctrine of the sovereignty of God in both politics and history.

Thus, we do have a "Christian theology of politics" or let's call it "Christian politics", not in the sense that it was a politics in which Christians are engaged, but in the sense that it is a Christian view of politics - and, there have been various theologies of politics (e.g. Augustinian, Thomistic, Lutheran, Anabaptist, etc). Similarly, there are also various Islamic approaches to politics.

Luther's political theology of politics and the church being two separate realms doesn't allow the concept of a "Christian Nation" anymore. Politics is secular (this-worldly).

However, what if we keep the ideas of "nation" (as people of a country - not according to race or religion, but according to citizenship) and of "state" (as a political system) separate, then can one speak in terms of "Muslim nation", "Christian nation", and "Hindu nation" -- without meaning "Muslim state", "Christian state", and "Hindu state"?

Let's say "America is a Christian nation but not a Christian state, because Christianity is not the state religion of America". Well, if "nation" has nothing to do with politics at all, i.e. one doesn't use the term "nation" in the sense of a political nation, then there is no reason why one can't speak of a "Christian nation" or even of a "Hindu nation". However, generally that is not the case. When one talks of nation, the idea of a political nation does come into the mind. And, of course there is nothing like a religious nation (if it were there, it would not respect political boundaries and so the political adjective becomes meaningless). A nation can only be political, and nationality is political, not religious. To use the term "Christian nation" or "Muslim nation" or "Hindu nation" is to categorize nation under a particular religion, as a religious nation. That is a contradiction in terms and so is illogical and unbiblical as well. On the other hand, one can safely use terms like "Indian Christians" or "American Christians", since such terms carry the idea of individual religious affiliations of citizens in a country.

ETHICS

VIOLENCE

“God is Love,” the Bible tells us, and His soul is absolutely aversive to violence (1Jn.4:8; Ps.11:5). We are told that He once destroyed the entire world by the Flood when He saw that the earth was filled with violence (Gen.6:11,13).

“But, isn’t that also an act of violence?” someone may ask, “When God punishes people, throws them into hell fire? And, what about the violence that God commanded in the Law of Moses to stone people to death, to destroy the Canaanites? How can we say that God hates violence, then?”

At the very beginning, we must make a distinction between divine violence and sinful violence. To say that God is non-violent is to deny the obvious. God’s violence is evident in the Scripture; however, His violence is true to His own holy and righteous nature. His violence is the violence of justice and salvation. The violence of sin, on the other hand, is the violence of injustice, evil, and destruction. It is man’s active expression of His estrangement and separation from God. It is this violence that God cuts down by His acts of righteous judgment. And who can stand before Him?

Now, we know that God is Love; which also means that He is opposite of everything that is not Love. We also know that God is Light; which also means that He is opposite of Darkness. In other words, God’s nature has no place for anything that is opposed to Love and Light. He is the pure and personal form of Love. God is the Person called Love. Consequently, as the nature of light is to destroy Darkness, so the nature of Love is to destroy Hatred. In the Kingdom of Light, there is no place for Darkness, there is no night (Rev.22:5). This destruction is natural; in other words, true to the very nature of Love and Light.

We do not appreciate Hatred to triumph over Love; if it did, just imagine what would become of the world. We also do not appreciate Darkness to triumph over Light. It is an impossibility. So, we know that Love always triumphs over Hatred as Light triumphs over Darkness (Rom.12:21; John 1:5). It is impossible for Hatred to persist in the presence of God who is Love.

When the Bible talks about violence as sin, it refers to the violence that is antithetical to the nature of God. There is a form of violence which is harmless. For instance, when a surgeon uses knives, scissors, and needles to cut open and sew together the flesh of a patient, it is a form of violence; but, it is not sin. Such violence is intended to bring healing. The Bible tells us that when Jesus returns the second time, He will seize away and take away by force His Church with Him – that is what the Greek word *harpazo* (for “caught up”) means in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. That will be an act of violence; but this is a violence of salvation. But, why will He seize the Church away? To protect her from the evil that is going to set loose on the earth, to keep her away from the Tribulation, and to save her from the Judgment to come. It will be an act of violent love.

Salvation is an act of violent love. We know that. Someone said it well that when Jesus hung on the Cross, it was Love crucified by Sin. The Bible tells us that Jesus endured the hostility of sinful men (Heb.12:3; 1Pet.2:23). He let the blows of sin fall on His body, and He bore our sins. The Crucifixion of Christ was the greatest act of Violent Sin that humanity committed against God; because, in it man tried to violently murder God Himself. However, the Crucifixion of Christ was also the greatest act of Violent Love that God showed towards humanity; because in it He

allowed man to hurt Him personally and embraced him as he was there on the Cross. Thus, He cancelled the writ of Law against us, the declaration of Judgment, because Sin was consumed in His voluntary Sacrifice. And, there is no Law that can stand against God's voluntary Sacrifice. He allowed the violence of man on Himself. He gave Himself up on the Altar of the Father. He drank the Cup of Suffering. That's why the saints talk about *agape* as Sacrificial Love. And, God is *Agape*. On the Cross, Love triumphed over Hatred.

But, how does that answer the violence legalized by God in the Old Testament? We have already looked at one face of the answer; the next is also important.

The Bible says that God is Life (1Jn.5:20). This means that God is the opposite of Death. Death and Life are contradictory to each other. And, Life triumphs over Death. Thus, anything opposed to God is Death. When man in Noah's days rebelled against God and did whatever he liked, walking according to his evil imagination (Gen.6:5), he embraced the finality of Death. Only Noah found favor in God's eyes (6:8). This doesn't mean that God didn't give a chance to the others. The Bible says that God waited patiently for them, but none except the 8 people who got into the Ark, could receive the favor of God (1Pet.3:19). The Spirit did strive with the people, but they rejected God, they rejected Love, they rejected Life, because of their own hatred and sinful violence (Gen. 6:3; 1Pet.3:19,20). Noah accepted the grace of God and became the heir of righteousness by faith (Heb.11:7). To reject Life and embrace Death is foolishness, we say; but, that is what humanity does again and again. We have no rights to Life when we have rejected Life. It's a contradiction.

What about the Canaanites then? Why did God order to kill them all?

The same principle applies even there. However, this time God uses man to judge man, a nation to judge another nation, instead of using a flood; for He had made a Covenant:

"I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth" (Gen.9:11).

"Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man" (Gen.9:6).

Not even Israel was exempt of this universal Covenant. When we read the books of Kings, Chronicles, and the Prophets we know that when they sinned by rejecting God, God raised another nation to execute judgment over them. Judgment is nothing but giving someone his/her rightful place – in this case, when someone rejects Life, he/she embraces Death and Death comes in various forms: sword, pestilence, and famine to name a few (Jer.14:12).

With regard to the Canaanites and the nations that God commanded Israel to destroy, God makes these statements with a warning for Israel:

"Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants" (Lev.18:25)

"And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you" (Lev.18:28)

To vomit is a hurtful and violent experience; but to vomit is to cast out substance that is unacceptable, even lethal, to the body – it is one way of saying, "We are opposed; we can't stick together!" If a body doesn't vomit up a lethal substance, it accepts its own destruction. It's an either/or condition: Either Light or Darkness, Life or Death.

God is not compelled to cast them out. It is His nature as Light, that when He turns His face to action, Darkness is blotted out. He is not like man who might be indecisive at times. He is the Perfect and Absolute one and in Him there is no shadow of turning (James 1:17). His Love is so violent that it embraced us despite of the hurt we gave Him. It is also so violent that it will vomit us out if we don't renounce ourselves and become one spirit with Him (1Cor.6:17). When we do that, then we'll find in our lives Love and not Hatred, because the fruit of the Spirit is Love (Gal.5:22). We will be as He is.

EATING BLOOD

In the Jerusalem Council, mentioned in Acts 15:20, one of the things that the apostles by the Holy Spirit made mandatory to abstain from was eating of blood. The Old Testament commandment applied even in the New Testament. God gave two reasons for abstaining from blood (Leviticus 17:11):

1. Life is in the blood, so we are prohibited to eat blood. That life is in the blood is a scientific fact that has not changed even today. So, the law applies.
2. God had given it to us upon the altar to make atonement for our souls, for it is blood that makes atonement for the soul, the Bible says. In the New Testament, God did just that, He offered His blood on the Altar. The blood belongs to the altar exclusively, and so we are called to abstain from it.

TAKING THE LORD'S NAME IN VAIN

The third of the Ten Commandments is: "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain." (Exo 20:7)

To take the name of the Lord in vain means to use it unnecessarily, wrongfully, falsely, disrespectfully, incautiously, and irreverently.

Examples are:

1. Using phrases such as "Oh my God!" and "Jesus" as an interjection (or worse, as an expletive, along with words such as "shit"). Usually, it is part of a person's language, but it must be consciously removed from speech (Matt.12:35-37; Eph.5:4)
2. Saying that God had said something when He had not said it. This applies to even wrong and twisted interpretation of God's word (Eze.13:6; 22:28; Matt.15:9)
3. Swearing by God's name falsely (Lev.19:12; Matt.5:33-37)
4. Saying that they are being led by God, when actually they are being led by their own lust (James 1:13,14). For example, one may say that God was leading him to marry a girl, or to go to some place, or do this or do that when actually he is being carried away by his own desires, presumptions, feelings, and emotions.

TEMPTING GOD

To tempt the Lord means to try to seduce or provoke Him to fulfill the tempter's wishes, which is impossible (Exo.17:2). God can neither contradict Himself (2Tim.2:13) nor can He be tempted to sin (James 1:13). The consequence is that it only invites God's wrath on the tempter who has actually sinned by contradicting God (Deut.6:16). God said that the Israelites in the wilderness

tempted God 10 times (Num.14:22).

People can tempt the Lord by

1. Contending and complaining instead of trusting God in difficult situations (Exo.17:1,2,3). This questions God's goodwill for their lives.
2. Creating provocative situations and challenging God to act on their behalf (Matt.4:5,6,7). This questions God's centrality in their lives.
3. Misquoting, misrepresenting, and wrongly applying God's word (Matt.4:5,6,7). This questions the faithfulness of God.
4. Not paying attention to and disobeying the voice of God (Num.14:22). This undermines the seriousness of divine communication.
5. Conspiring to deceive God (Acts 5:8,9; Gal.6:7). This questions God's righteous and just nature; that He cannot overlook sin.

USING MEDICINES

There is a confusion among Christians that believers should not use medicines. However, the Bible nowhere makes it statutory or law for the believer to refrain from medicines. In fact, the Bible is against humans making laws that God has not made. Matthew 15.9; Isaiah 29.13. There are only the Ten commandments and the Two Great Commandments of Jesus Christ. Matthew 22.37.

The Bible never tells us that using medicines or any scientific invention (e.g. ovens, utensils, agricultural technology, weapons, etc) is sign of unbelief. In fact, God gives wisdom so that man through science and technology can improve his living. The only evil is when man begins to trust in science and technology above and beyond God like the kings of Israel who trusted in chariots and horsemen or physicians.

Now, take the example of irrigation. It is very important for a farmer to believe in God for rains and production. However, this doesn't mean that he must refrain from irrigational technologies like water pumps, etc., made possible by modern science, especially when he has capacity to avail of such technology. Likewise, one uses mosquito repellents to repel mosquitoes, tooth paste to clean teeth and kill harmful germs, right choice of food to replenish the body, fans and coolers to regulate temperature. A believer can use any of these and still have strong faith in God. The same David who fought with a sling, later used swords in battle. He didn't go down in faith by doing that. A believer uses scientific advancements to combat natural or physical evil with thankfulness to God who is the giver of all good gifts and wisdom. James 1.5,17.

Remember nothing good comes from the devil; all good comes from God. And medicine which destroys evil must also be thought as God's gift to man. It is a kind of blessing. For example, Jacob considered the possession of balm (analgesic medicine) as wealth (blessing) (Genesis 43.11). Bible looks positively at medicine (Proverbs 17.22; Eze. 47.12). Luke was a physician (note the present tense used there) (Colossians 4.14). The word physician is *iatros* in Greek and used 7 times in the New Testament and always refers to a medical practitioner. Thus Luke was a medical man and still a believer and servant of Christ.

Divine healing is God's intervention to heal us. Sometimes this is direct, sometimes through the use of some medium; e.g., mud for the blind man, oil, dry figs for Hezekiah. God wants us to be healthy and therefore through faith and prayer one can experience divine healing. Jesus healed many people and many testimonies exist of how God heals us. GOD is our Healer. Therefore,

as believers our ultimate dependence must be on God. One should pray and seek prayer from men of God in times of sickness so that God's healing will flow in us.

In James 5: 14, the sick man is asked to call for the elders of the church to come and pray for him. Remember, it doesn't say that the sick man should sit at home all alone and pray by himself. It says he should call the elders. Why, doesn't the believer have faith? Can't he be healed if he prays by himself? Of course, he can. But calling the elders for prayer not only shows that in times of sickness our strongest dependence must be in God but also the depth of fellowship that the church experiences, the care for each other. However, it must be noted that James is not speaking here about minor headaches or body aches for which use of balm and rest can bring relief. He is talking about sickness. And the believer must understand that though he may consult the physician during times of illness, he must also call for the church to pray for him, because the church is his family and secondly, if the sickness is because of some sin, confession can bring cure. But this doesn't mean he should not consult a doctor. It is like saying that since we asked for our pastor to pray for our house construction we won't consult an architect or engineer, or to go to the extreme we won't hire a mason. The doctor is not God, he is only a man who knows some scientific principles and tips about the body. And knows the ways in which balance and health can be restored. If we knew what he knew then we would not need to consult him, in the same way that if I knew tailoring I won't give my clothes to the tailor. Does going to a doctor mean that we don't believe in God's healing? Absolutely, no. But above all our trust must be in God.

PRAYER AGAINST ENEMIES

The question is an intriguing one, for three reasons: first, David is looked up to as a model to emulate; secondly, because the psalms were written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; and, thirdly, of course, because enmity, rivalry, and injustice are tempting enough for any Christian to desire the immediate downfall of the enemy. So, one asks "Is it wrong to pray for God's wrath to fall on our enemies?"

Many of us know the answer; but, we still want to reason a way for immediate vengeance. Let me list out some New Testament facts that seem to indicate that seeking divine vengeance for our enemies seem justified in some instances.

1. Jesus said that it's better for a millstone to be tied on the neck of the man who offends a little one (Matthew 18:6).
2. Paul struck the sorcerer with blindness who tried to oppose the Gospel (Acts 13:8-10).
3. Paul desired God to reward Alexander according to his deeds for doing harm to him (2Tim.4:14).
4. The Book of Revelation talks about the souls of the martyrs crying out for vengeance (Rev.6:9,10).

So, it seems that in some cases, divine intervention is sought to remove offences or to ensure justice. But, we cannot transform exceptions into rules. Yet, certainly, we also need to understand what the exceptional cases are in which such prayers are valid and what the general prayer-content of New Testament Christian must be with regard to any enemies – personal, communal, or anti-Christ. Let's make these distinctions clear and also look introductorily into the New Testament rules for dealing with enemies at these three levels.

1. Personal enemies are those who are enemies for personal reasons. The reasons might be many. But, if the reason is just, Jesus taught us to get reconciled first, before bringing an offering on the altar (Matt.5:23,24). We must resolve the case with the offended party before he drags us to the court (Matt 5:25,26). However, if someone becomes an enemy out of envy and jealousy, we are commanded to pray for them, bless them, and do good to them (Matt.5:44). Now, “good” must be defined as benevolent action showed with the balance of wisdom.

2. Communal enemies are those who are enemies because they are enemies of the group we are in. It is enmity by label and brand. There are various types of such. National enmity, racial enmity, religious enmity, clan or tribe enmity, linguistic enmity, denominational enmity, corporation enmity, and so on. For instance, the Naxalites would consider anyone wearing the khaki uniform (police uniform) as their enemy. The New Testament principle still suggests benevolence with wisdom. A story from Abraham Lincoln's life provides a good example of this. During the civil war when the South and North were boiling with rage for vengeance and victory, Abraham Lincoln paid a visit to the enemy camp where wounded soldiers were lying and shook hands with each speaking kindly to them. A lady confronted him and remarked, “You must be destroying your enemies instead of shaking hands with them.” Abe Lincoln replied, “I do destroy my enemies when I make them my friends.” Jesus prayed for His enemies and wanted them to be forgiven and saved. He commanded us to pray for our enemies and to do good to them. But, wisdom also teaches to be ready to protect people from destruction intended by the violent. That is where national security, human rights protection, and legally provided defense rights fall in place.

3. The third level of enmity is motivated by hatred for the Name of Christ. There are those who treat the Christian as an enemy just because of his/her commitment to Christ. Now, this must be differentiated from communal or denominational enmity. A communal enemy may not hate Christ but may hate the Christian community for some historical or communal reasons. But, when the enmity is due to the Name of Christ, it is anti-Christ (to be distinguished from anti-Christian just to avoid confusion with communal enmity). The beatitude teaches us to rejoice and be glad when people persecute us and speak bad things about us for the Name of Christ for our reward is great in heaven (Matt.5:11,12).

In all these then, it is clear that the New Testament mandate teaches benevolence coupled with wisdom. But, let's look at a few case studies to understand the issue a bit more clearly.

When a village of Samaria rejected Jesus, James and John got so infuriated that they wished to command fire from heaven fall and burn that place. But, Jesus replied that their fury was not from a godly spirit. He then made this important statement that He had come not to destroy but to save (Luke 9:54-57). This is the guiding principle of our Christian attitude towards our enemies. However, when the rejection is clearly final, Jesus did also say that the disciples must shake the dust of the city off (Luke 9:5) and leave the place for God to deal with on the Day of Judgment (note: He still allowed space of time till the Day of Judgment). At the same time, when the deputy was willing to listen to the Gospel but was being misguided by the magician, Paul struck the magician with blindness, for a season – for the sake of the Gospel (Acts 13:6-12). Such apostolic authority to discern the spirit and deal with authority in such situations are evident in the New Testament when, for instance, Peter deals with falsehood in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, deals with the commercial motive of Simon the Sorcerer, and Paul writes a stern letter to the Corinthian Church. We're ready now to glean some principles to guide us in situation of enmity:

1. Remember the New Testament rule of salvation: Jesus came to save and not to destroy; so, anyone who wishes the destruction of anybody in this time of grace wishes against the mission of Christ. We are in fact called to pray in such a way that will lead to the salvation of all men (1Timothy 2:1-8). The Old Testament was about condemnation and death (2Corinthians 3); but the New Testament ministry is the ministry of reconciliation, peace, salvation, and life. We are called to follow the example of Jesus in loving, forgiving, and doing good to those who unjustly hate us. But, if we have done something against someone, we must seek reconciliation and restoration.

2. Our motive of love being clear, we must remember that there are times when we must responsibly deal with people in accordance with our office and role in the world. For instance, a soldier at war with an enemy nation should have a benevolent spirit; but, that doesn't mean that he stops fulfilling his role to defend his country. Yet, he must also be kind to his enemies when they have surrendered and in need of kindness. Similarly, the elders of the Church must be wise in the area of discipline and exercise of spiritual authority; yet, in the spirit of love and wisdom.

So, can we pray for God's wrath to fall on our enemies in the New Testament? Absolutely not. Because we live in the age of grace and not the age of condemnation. Of course, grace was also available in the Old Testament, or else David himself should have been stoned to death for committing adultery and murder. But, it was still an age of condemnation that operated according to the Law of Moses. However, Jesus brought grace and truth to light (John 1:17). We must be messengers of peace, grace, and truth in the world. So, we do not pray for destruction of people; but, we pray for God to save people from their sins, thus putting a loving end to enmity. At the same time we, as sons of God must be peacemakers (Matt 5:9), ready to apologize when we offend and seek for reconciliation and peace with people at both personal and communal levels.

CASTING LOTS

There are only three instances where casting of lots is mentioned in the New Testament: (1) When Zacharias' turn came, by lot, to minister in the temple (Luke 1:9), (2) When the soldiers cast lots to divide the garments of Jesus (Matt 27:35), and (3) When Matthias was chosen by lot to take the place of Judas Iscariot as one among the Twelve (Acts 1:26). Following that, there is no mention of casting lots anymore in the Bible.

Scholars believe that this is so because we live in the Age of the Holy Spirit and every decision after Pentecost comes from Him.

In the Old Testament, however, God did command His people to decide a number of things on the basis of lots. For instance, the Scapegoat on the Day of Atonement had to be chosen by lot (Lev.16:8) and the Promised Land had to be divided among the tribes by lot (Num.26:55). In the book of Jonah we find that lots were cast to determine who the culprit was, and the lot rightly fell on Jonah. Lots were cast in serious matters where human capacities were exhausted and the only resolve was an appeal to the Higher Authority. It could never be done lightheartedly or with unbelief. The ones who cast the lots to make some decision couldn't choose to doubt. Faith was integral to the whole procedure. They couldn't, for instance, cast the lot and then say "Oh, let's do it again. May be this just couldn't be right. Anyway, it's all a game of chance." No, chance was a meaningless term here. Nothing happened by chance for someone who had faith. God was the one who held every element in the universe together. Therefore, it was declared: "The

lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.” (Prov.16:33).

The Old Testament was a world of shadows. Everything, including the material blessings and the various laws, pointed towards a higher reality: the sacrifices pointed to Christ, the Promised Land points to the True Rest, the material blessings point to the eternal inheritance of the saints. In the New Testament, faith and indecision can't go together. If there is indecisiveness, we must ask God for wisdom (regarding what must be done) and the Holy Spirit is there to guide us (James 1:5). There is no need to cast lots anymore when it comes to matters of knowing God's will. One must ask with faith without wavering and God will answer. In the same manner that one couldn't doubt the decision of the lot in the Old Testament, one cannot doubt the guidance of the Holy Spirit and His control over our affairs when we surrender ourselves to Him in obedience to His Word. But, someone who wavers and keeps doubting and thinking “Oh, this might not be the right thing” and seeks other ways like trying to know what others think about this or that will never receive any wisdom from God. He will remain uncertain and doubt the whole thing, even if he did make a decision.

Of course, a carnal or an unspiritual person cannot understand the language of the Spirit.

CHARITABLE LOAN VS COMMERCIAL AND LUXURY LOAN

There is a difference between charitable loan and the other kinds of loans.

A charitable loan is loan lent to the poor. Interests cannot be demanded on them. The loan is charitable (Exo.22:25)

A commercial loan is a loan that someone takes in order to invest it into property or business. The money is expected to multiply through such investment and accrue profit. Interest rates are applicable to such loans.

A luxury loan is loan taken in order to purchase things of luxury, not things of need (e.g. HDTV, Cars, etc). Usually, the goods purchased there by either get used up (eaten up) or fall into depreciation, other conditions remaining the same.

All loan involves some surety or collateral of some kind, in proportion to which faith and value the loan is lent.

The Bible prohibits staying in debt (Rom.13:8) and not returning what is due to the other (Psa.37:21).

In the Old Testament, failure to repay could end one up in slavery (Deuteronomy 15:12-18).

However, the Bible does encourage charitable loans. In fact, in the New Testament, the rule is intense: one ought not to expect a return, especially if the loan was to aid the poor (Matt.5:42; Luke 14:12-14). However, Jesus showed that it is not unwise to lend to bankers (investors) who could multiply the money and repay it with interest (Matt.25:26).

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, LAW, AND JUSTICE

Civil obedience obligatorily relates to Justice. Civil obedience is mandatory when the laws are just. However, civil obedience is not mandatory when laws are unjust. In fact, *civil disobedience* is obligatory when laws are unjust. The officers and judges during Hitler's reign might have argued that they were obeying their laws; however, since those laws were not just; therefore, they were guilty of crimes against humanity. Similarly, we find civil disobedience in the Bible when Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego refused to bow before the golden image (Dan. 3:14-16), when Daniel opened the windows and openly prayed in defiance to a law prohibiting the same (Daniel 6:10), and when the Apostles refused the authorities' command to stop preaching the Gospel.

But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard." (Act 4:19-20 NIV)

Formula:

- Law+Justice+Obedience = Peace & Order
- Law-Justice+Obedience = Crime & Destruction
- Law+Justice+Disobedience = Anarchy
- Law-Justice+Disobedience = Resistance

Evidently, the state of civil disobedience is a state of unrest and struggle. There can only be peace when the laws are just and people obey just laws. However, civil disobedience to unjust laws certainly signifies peace within the heart, where resolve submits to conscience. (Rom.2:15) When, from the fountain of a pure conscience, just actions follow, peace prevails within, and peace flows without.

Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble. (Psa 119:165 NIV)

However, when the heart is allowed to be hardened in compliance to godless authority and laws, judgment comes (2Chr. 36:14-16).

CAN CHRISTIANS DRINK ALCOHOL?

In 1Timothy 5:23, Paul exhorts Timothy:

No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities. (1Ti 5:23)

This verse, at first glance, seems to be a deviation from the main context of the passage. In verses above and verses below, Paul is actually talking about rebuking those who sin, in keeping oneself pure, and not laying hands on someone very quickly (as if to condemn, perhaps as the context suggests). The passage is:

Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses.

Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.

I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality.

Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure.

No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities. Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later. Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden. (1Ti 5:19-25 NKJ)

Certainly, Paul cannot be deviating from the main thought of the passage when he suddenly tells Timothy not to just drink water for his stomach's sake. The context suggests that Paul is actually telling Timothy to understand when to use water and when to use a little wine, figuratively speaking (with regard to softness of love and hardness of discipline). Timothy seems to be a timid and sensitive youth whom Paul mentored. Often, emotions and appearances may influence hasty judgment. Sometimes, quickness is appropriate; other times, one will need to wait (1Tim.5:19,22,24,25). Sometimes, executing discipline can be like using a little wine. It may feel hard; however, it helps one's stomach. This, by the way, may just be a saying interposed to communicate the importance of discipline. It may not literally mean that Timothy had stomach problems which Paul wants to alleviate by prescribing wine. The context doesn't warrant such an interpretation.

POLYGAMY

It is indisputable that polygamy was allowed by the Mosaic Law in the Old Testament (Deut.21:15). However, the New Testament extols monogamy as a virtue (1Tim.3:2,12; 5:9). In the New Testament, remarriage is only allowed in the case of the death of the spouse (1Tim.5:14).

However, polygamy certainly was not the original marital institution. In the Old Testament, it was allowed because of the hardness of human hearts due to sin. The Law was given for the lawless (1Tim.1:9; Matt.19:5,6,8). One must note that even in the Old Testament unrestricted polygamy was not allowed (Deut.17:17).

...the commandments of Grace are tougher and more demanding than the commandments of the Law. The Bible tells us that the Law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came with Jesus Christ (John 1:17). Jesus ushered in the era of Grace. Not that grace was absent in the Old Testament; but that grace could only be available even in the Old Testament because of the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the earth. And, when Christ came Grace came in reality, for until then everything was only shadows (Col.2:17). Therefore, it says, "Grace and truth came with Jesus Christ".

The commandments of Grace, therefore, supersede the commandments of the Law. Grace teaches us true righteousness (Tit.2:11,12; Matt.5:20).

Thus, certain things that were allowed in the Old Testament (like divorce, swearing, polygamy, and tit-for-tat ethics) are not allowed anymore in the New Testament (Matt.5:31,34, 38,39). Most of these things were allowed because of the hardness of human hearts, but God never originally intended them so (Matt.19:8). However, in the Age of Grace when His Grace transforms our hearts, we are called to love our neighbor as ourselves and to pray for our enemies, we are called not to resist evil people but turn our left cheek to someone who slaps on our right (i.e. severely insults and humiliates us). The demands of Grace are higher than the demands of the Law.

In the earlier days of Christian work in Africa, the missionaries came face to face with the

problem of polygamy. The question of what a person who has turned to Christ do with his multiple wives became an issue. To abandon them might mean doing injustice to them (since, they had come into the relationship before) and unwanted subjection of women and children to suffering. However, in most cases, the churches decided that those who had many wives should not be permitted to be baptized until they have sent away all the other wives except one (usually the first wife). It was also decided that a polygamist who becomes a believer may be admitted for lay leadership but not for ordination. This, however, had been met by severe criticisms with leaders objecting that "the usual practice of enforcing the separation of wives from their husbands, upon their conversion to Christianity, is quite unwarrantable, and opposed to the plain teaching of our Lord." (See Muthengi, p.71). Another view that the previous polygamist must keep only the first legal wife and take care of the other wives as sisters (having no sexual relationship with them) is also not without criticism.

A few more facts must be noted about the relationship between the Old Order of Law and the New Order of Grace:

1. The validity of the Old Law was not annulled by the New (Matt.5:17)
2. However, what was put to death in the New, with regard to the Old, was not supposed to be resurrected again (Rom.7:4; Luke 5:36,37; Col.2:20,21)
3. The old only gradually vanishes and fades away in the presence of the New (Heb.8:13). For instance, Paul didn't altogether give up the observance of the Old Testament Law and visiting the Temple, although he preached the New Testament. Similarly, Jesus also asked the lepers to show themselves to the priests after He healed them.
4. One must remember that Grace is not Lawless, but is the Original Law that teaches the perfect righteousness of God (Tit.2:11,12).

And so, with regard to pre-baptism polygamists we can say that the New Testament does not say that their marriages within the Old system was not legal (but, with regard to the hardness of hearts); however, it declares them to be no longer binding within the New Covenant, in the same way that it was no longer binding for the Apostles to visit the Temple every year anymore. However, one must no longer approach this issue after the manner of the rigidity of Law (in a legalistic pattern; for the New Testament is not merely about law) but after the spirit of Grace. Thus, to even put away the wives without proper "restitution" would be more evil. Also, since marriage is seen as a covenant, the comparison with cases of how the New Testament deals with some Old Testament issues like Temple law or even Slavery Laws may only be a little proximate, but not exactly mirroring. Further, we do note that slavery was not immediately abolished under the New Testament. Both the Temple Laws, for the Jewish Christians, and the Slavery Laws were still applicable except that the New Testament introduced the element of grace and the Christian was no longer legally required to visit the Temple, and while slavery was allowed, the masters were instructed to not be violent against the slaves, but even as the slaves were to serve the masters as slaves to Christ, the masters were to treat their slaves remembering that they had a Master in heaven (Eph.6:5-9). Christ came in the middle as Lord of both. But, the issue becomes a little complicated with regard to the issue of pre-baptism polygamy, and we cannot specify a general rigid rule for every situation. While the principles of justice are universal, the manner in which justice is to be meted out in a particular situation is only determined after a proper assessment of that situation. That is where one needs divine wisdom.

In any case, however, the New Testament gives no rationale for allowing polygamous sexual relationships. For, if the "hardness of heart" has already been dealt with already, then "loving

wife as Christ loved His Church" is the spirit reflected even in the Song of Songs (the Old Testament book written by the most polygamist king ever), leaving no excuse.

SOCIAL ETHICS

TO PARENTS

- A. Encourage your child (Colossians 3:21)
 - Don't let them feel discouraged, sullen, inferior, or frustrated.
 - Give gifts (Luke 11:11-13), Forgive, don't dig the past (Luke 15:22)
- B. Discipline him/her while he is young (Proverbs 19:18; Hebrews 12:10)
- C. Nurture him/her in the Lord (Ephesians 6:4)
 - 1. In the training** (Proverbs 22:6, **Catechize**, 2Timothy 3:15)
 - 2. Discipline** (Proverbs 13:24; 22:15; 19:18; 23:13,14; 29:15,17)
 - 3. Counsel**
 - 4. Admonition**
- D. Do not Irritate your child (Colossians 3:21; Ephesians 6:4)
 - 1. Do not provoke to anger
 - 2. Do not exasperate him/her to resentment
 - 3. Do not fret
 - 4. Do not be hard on them or harass them
 - 5. Do not break their spirit
- E. Provide for one's home (1Timothy 5:8; Proverbs 31:21,22,24,27).

TO CHILDREN

- A. Obey your parents in all things. Make it a lifestyle to obey. For this is well pleasing unto the Lord (Colossians 3:20).
- B. Obey your parents in the Lord. (Ephesians 6:1). For this is right.
- C. Honor them (Ephesians 6:2,3). That it may be well with you, and that you may live long.
- D. Serve them (1Timothy 5:4).

The wrath of God descends on the disobedient (Romans 1:30,32)

TO MARRIED COUPLES

- A. In Union (Together) (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6; 1Corinthians 7:5,10)
 - 1. Mutual Love (1Corinthians 7:3, Conjugal rights, goodwill, kindness, etc)
 - 2. Mutual Self-Giving/Submit to Authority of Other (1Corinthians 7:4)
 - 3. Mutual Consent (1Corinthians 7:5. In submission to the Lord. Not like Ananias and Sapphira as in Acts 5, but like the Shunammite couple in 2Kings 4:9)
- B. Duties of Husbands
 - 1. Be the Head of your wife (Ephesians 5:23; 1Corinthians 11:3. Leadership, decision-making)
 - 2. Make Christ your Head (1Corinthians 11:3)
 - 3. Follow Christ's Example (Christ's love for the Church)
 - a. Love (Ephesians 5:25,28,33; Colossians 3:19)
 - b. Nourish, protect, and cherish her (Ephesians 5:29)
 - c. Honor her with great respect (1Peter 3:7)
- C. Duties of Wives
 - 1. Be Body/helpmeet for him (Genesis 2:20)
Accept his headship/rulership (Genesis 3:16; Ephesians 5:22)
Be bound to him till he dies (Romans 7:2)
 - 2. Desire for him alone (Genesis 3:16)

3. Learn from husband (1Corinthians 14:35)
4. Be subject to husband as to the Lord (Ephesians 5:22,24)
 - a. Submission in obedience (Titus 2:5; 1Peter 3:1)
 - b. Adaptation
5. Revere husband (Ephesians 5:33)
 - a. Notice him (pay attention, have concern)
 - b. Regard him
 - c. Honor him
 - d. Prefer him
 - e. Venerate, esteem him (think highly of, value greatly)
 - f. Defer to him (submission)
 - g. Praise him
 - h. Love and admire him exceedingly
6. Be sober, wise (Titus 2:4; Proverbs 31:26,30)
7. Be trustworthy (Proverbs 31:11,12)
8. Be self-controlled (Titus 2:5)
9. Be chaste (Titus 2:5; Proverbs 31:10,25,11; 1Peter 3:2)
10. Be homemakers (Proverbs 31:28,29, 15,16,18,21)
11. Be good natured, kindhearted (Proverbs 31:12)
12. Be hardworking (Proverbs 31:12-30). Not be idle (1Timothy 5:13)
13. Be meek and quiet (1Peter 3:4-6). Not nagging (Proverbs 21:19, 9; 19:13; 27:15)

TO FELLOW CHRISTIANS

1. Prayer (Colossians 4:12; Acts 12:5; James 5:15)
2. Love (Romans 12:10)
3. Honor (Romans 12:10)
4. Help, Assistance, Aid (Romans 12:13; 1Corinthians 16:1; Galatians 6:6)
5. Hospitality (Romans 12:13; 1Timothy 3:2)
6. Sympathy (Romans 12:15; Galatians 6:2; Romans 15:1-7)
7. Humility (Romans 12:16)
8. Goodness (Romans 12:17)
9. Honest (Romans 12:17; 1Corinthians 8:21; Truthfulness, Ephesians 4:25,15)
10. Edifying words (Ephesians 4:29)
11. Restoration (Galatians 6:1,2)
12. Exhortation (2Timothy 4:2)
13. Mutual Subjection (1Peter 5:5)
14. Forbearing (Colossians 3:13)
15. Forgiving (Colossians 3:13)

TO SERVANTS

1. Honor master, boss. (1Timothy 6:1,2)
2. Obey (Ephesians 6:5, 6-8; Colossians 3:23-25)
 - a. With fear
 - b. Single-heartedly
 - c. As unto Christ
 - d. Not as men-pleasers
 - e. But as Christ's servants
 - f. Doing God's will
3. Don't answer back (Titus 2:9)
4. Faithful (Titus 2:10)
5. Subjection (1Peter 2:18-20)

TO MASTERS (BOSSES)

1. Do not threaten (Ephesians 6:9)
Don't be violent. Don't use abusive words
2. Be just and fair (Colossians 4:1)
Do not exploit. Give the right wages. Be merciful. Treat them with respect.

TOWARDS THE WORLD IN GENERAL

1. Intercede for them (1Timothy 2:1-4; Isaiah 12:23)
2. Honor (1Peter 2:17)
3. Be honest (Romans 12:17)
4. Speak edifying words (Ephesians 4:29)
5. Witness (1Thessalonians 2:4; 1Peter 3:1-5; Philippians 1:13; Matthew 5:14; Philippians 2:15)
6. Follow the Golden rule (Matthew 7:12)
7. Keep no debts but love (Romans 13:7-8)

TOWARDS AUTHORITIES

1. Honor them (Romans 13:7)
2. Be subject to them (Romans 13:1; 1Peter 2:13-16)
3. Pray/Intercede for them (1Timothy 2:2-4)

OUTLINE OF THEOLOGY

Compiled and Edited (2009)

INTRODUCTION

The Meaning of Theology

Theology is a study of Christian doctrine and faith. The Queen of sciences, Theology is an attempt towards a systematic exposition of and presentation of Christian doctrine.

The Need of Theology

1. For a clear understanding of faith
2. As a rational and articulate defense of faith (1Pe. 3:15)
3. For a systematic presentation of God's revealed truths (2Ti. 2:15)
4. As a guard against heresy and false teachings (Mat. 22:29; Gal. 1:6-9; 2Ti. 4:2-4)
5. For spiritual growth and maturity as Christians (Eph. 4:14).

Divisions of Theology

1. **Biblical (Exegetical) Theology:** Often studied as Old Testament Theology and New Testament Theology based on an exegesis of the Bible.
2. **Historical Theology:** Study of the origin and development of theological perspectives in the context of their historical background.
3. **Systematic Theology:** Systems of theology or systematic arrangement of a presentation of doctrines.
4. **Practical Theology:** Application of Theology. Disciplines: *Homiletics, Pastoral Theology, Christian Education, Worship (Liturgies), Evangelism, Church Polity (Forms of Church Organization and Government)*.

Different Theologies

1. **Roman Catholic Theology** – Authority of the Bible (includes Apocrypha) and the Pope's authoritative pronouncements *ex cathedra* (from the chair); saving grace communicated through the 7 sacraments; and Mary is merciful mediator between man and Christ.
2. **Lutheran Theology** – The 3 fundamental doctrines are *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone), *sola gratia* (grace alone), and *sola fide* (faith alone). Scripture alone is authoritative and salvation comes only by grace through faith. The Spirit uses an infant baptism to produce faith in them and bring them to salvation.
3. **Reformed Theology** - **built** around the central theme of the sovereignty of God. *Sola scriptura*, the sole authority of Scripture in matters of doctrine. Total depravity of all men, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace, Perseverance of saints.
4. **Arminian Theology** – tries to preserve justice (fairness) of God. God's sovereignty along with human responsibility and freedom. Conditional election (predestination on basis of foreknowledge).
5. **Wesleyan Theology** – is essentially Arminian but has a stronger sense of the reality of sin and of dependence on divine grace. The ultimate standard for faith and practice is the Bible. Four means by which truth is mediated: Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience. Salvation is a 3-step process of grace: prevenient grace, justifying grace, and sanctifying grace. Prevenient grace keeps one from straying very far, and enables one to respond to the gospel. Justifying grace produces salvation in those who respond positively. Entire sanctification or perfection in love is the Holy Spirit's second work of grace.
6. **Liberal Theology** – Immanency of God. Unitarianism. Fallibility of Bible. Denial of Fall, original sin, and substitutionary nature of the Atonement. Christ will not personally return.
7. **Existential Theology** – 'Demythologizing' of Scripture – interprets everything supernatural as mythical. A statement about God is basically a statement about man. The Trinity is a myth. The historical Jesus is not very much known. Salvation is self-realization.

8. **Neo-orthodox Theology** – Hermeneutical. God cannot be known through proofs but only through encounter in revelation. Natural revelation, if it exists, is ineffective towards salvation. Revelation is personal not propositional. The Bible is human and fallible and is reliable only to the extent that God reveals himself through encounters with Scripture. Historicity of Scripture is unimportant.
9. **Liberation Theology** – Theology is not dogmatic but liberative. God is immanent and mutable, the God of the oppressed. Jesus was a messiah of political involvement. The Bible is not concerned with eternal truths but with specific history (often unreliable). The Exodus account proclaims liberation. Salvation is social change.
10. **Feminist Theology – 3 Models:** Rejectionists – reject Bible as patriarchal; Evangelical – The Bible teaches mutual submission and roles of women and men are complementary; Reformist (Liberation) – Discards Bible and Christian tradition as patriarchal and desires to overcome it through 'proper' exegesis.
11. **Pentecostal Theology** – Emphasis on the infallibility and finality of Scripture, salvation by grace, the baptism of the Holy Spirit with evidence of speaking in tongues, restoration of the five-fold ministry in the Church, the gifts of the Spirit, baptism by immersion, holiness, prayer and fasting, evangelism of the world, spiritual warfare, and return of Christ.

BIBLIOLOGY (BIBLE)

I. Revelation

Strong: {ἀποκάλυψις}

- 1) a laying bare, making naked
- 2) a disclosure of truth, instruction
 - 2a) concerning things before unknown
 - 2b) used of events by which things or states or persons hitherto withdrawn from view are made visible to all
- 3) manifestation, appearance (Strong)

General Revelation: Psa. 19:1-3; Act. 14:15-17; Rom. 1:18-20.

Special Revelation: Concerned with the redemptive plan of God. Special revelation is both **personal** and **propositional**.

Bible: The Written Word. All historical information (genealogies, covenants, law, events), literature (prose, poetry), prophecy, exposition (e.g. epistles) connected with and necessary for the complete understanding of the redemptive plan of God that He desires and intends us to have.

Visions, Dreams, Prophetic Word. Must accord with the Written Word (Gal. 1:8-9).

The Lord Jesus Christ: The Finality of the Revelation of God (Heb. 1:2-3)

Illumination: The Holy Spirit's revelation of the *rhema* to the human spirit, whereby man comes to an understanding of the Truth and responds to it through the help of the Holy Spirit's gift of faith. The subjective aspect of Revelation. This illumination accords with the totality of the Written Word and the Finality of Revelation in Christ (Joh. 14:26; Joh. 16:15). Necessary (1Co. 2:11).

II. The Purpose of Writing (Woodrow Kroll)

1. Precision: The Bible records the exact words in which God wanted to communicate with us.
2. Propagation: The written word spreads the message.
3. Preservation: The words are preserved in writing.

III. The Reliability of Bible

1. Historical Veracity
2. Prophetic Accuracy
3. Textual Authenticity

4. Pragmatic – *It works when put to practice.*
5. Scientific Accuracy
6. Philosophical Consistency.

IV. Inspiration

Theories of Inspiration

1. Mechanical or Dictation: The biblical author is a passive instrument in the transmission of the revelation of God. His personality is set aside to prevent its fallible intrusion.
2. Partial Inspiration: Only doctrines unknowable to the human authors are inspired. God revealed ideas which the writers penned in their own words.
3. Degrees of Inspiration: Certain portions of Bible are more or differently inspired than other portions.
4. Intuition or Natural Inspiration: Gifted individuals with exceptional insight were chosen by God to write the Bible. Inspiration is like an artistic ability or a natural endowment.
5. Illumination or Mystical Inspiration: Human authors were enabled by God to write the Scriptures. The H.S. heightened their normal powers.
6. Verbal, Plenary Inspiration: Both divine and human elements are present in the production of Scripture. The entire text of Scripture, including the very words, are a product of the mind of God expressed in human terms and conditions.

2Ti. 3:16 (*Theopneustos*): God-breathed

Neither mechanical nor dictational inspiration but organic; *i.e.*, the personality of the writers was involved. The writers were Spirit-borne, led, moved (*Phero*) (2Pe. 1:21)
The inspiration is verbal; *i.e.*, it extends to the words and not just the ideas.
The inspiration is plenary; *i.e.*, full – "All scripture..." ***equally***.

V. Infallibility: It is open to verification and falsification and is entirely perfect in its communication of the revealed Truth.

VI. Inerrancy: It contains no errors. **Complete Inerrancy:** The Bible is fully true in all it teaches or affirms. **Other Views: Limited Inerrancy:** Inerrant in salvific doctrines; **Teleological Inerrancy:** Inerrant in accomplishing its purpose of reconciling man to God; **Irrelevancy:** The doctrine is irrelevant; the spirit or purpose of Bible should be considered.

VII. The Bible is eternal and complete.

VIII. Canon: Lit. measuring rod, rule. *Canonicity, canonical, canonize.*

This word is derived from a Hebrew and Greek word denoting a reed or cane. Hence it means something straight, or something to keep straight; and hence also a rule, or something ruled or measured. It came to be applied to the Scriptures, to denote that they contained the authoritative rule of faith and practice, the standard of doctrine and duty. (*Easton's Bible Dictionary*).

5-fold Criteria: Authorship (Prophet, Apostle, Holy Man), Local Church Acceptance, Recognition by Church Fathers, Subject matter (Sound Doctrine), Personally edifying.

The OT canon is accepted as accepted by Christ and the apostles. The NT canon is accepted on the basis of apostolic authorship and recognition of the same by Church Fathers.

During the 3rd Council of Carthage (AD. 397) 27 NT Books were declared canonical. St. Athanasius (AD 297-373) in his 39th Paschal letter (AD 367), listed the books of the NT as we know them.

VIII. Symbols of it used in the Bible

1. Sword (Heb. 4:12) 2. Hammer (Jer. 23:29) 3. Seed (1Pe. 1:23) 4. Mirror (Jam. 1:23-25) 5. Fire (Jer. 23:29; Jer. 20:9) 6. Lamp (Psa. 119:105) 7. Food (1Pe. 2:2) 8. Water (Eph. 5:25-27) 9. Milk (1Pe. 2:2) 10. Meat (Heb. 5:12) 11. Bread (Mat. 4:4) 12. Silver (Psa. 12:6)

IX. Other Names

The Lord's Book (Isa. 34:16); The Book of Truth (Dan. 10:21); Scriptures (Joh. 10:35; Mat. 21:42); Holy

Scriptures (Rom. 1:2); Sacred Books (Dan. 9:2; Heb. 10:7); The Oracles of God (Rom. 3:2); The Word of God (Heb. 4:12); The Living Oracles of God (Act. 7:38).

X. The Bible Influences our: Thinking, Living, Values, Destiny.

XI. The Bible has Authority over: Human Wisdom, The Church, Our Experience, The Christian.

THEOLOGY PROPER (GOD)

I. The Existence of God

Arguments: From cause-effect (cosmological argument), from design-designer (teleological argument).

II. The Nature of God

Westminster Catechism: "God is Spirit, Infinite, Eternal, and Unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth."

III. Attributes of God

a. God's Inner Nature (Unrelated Attributes)

(i) **Spirit** (Joh. 4:24) (ii) **Infinite – Immense** in relation to space (1Ki. 8:27), **Eternal** in relation to time (Exo. 15:18; Deu. 33:27) (iii) **One** (Exo. 20:3; Deu. 4:35,39; 1Sa. 2:2; 1Ti. 1:17)

b. God in Relation to the Universe (Active Attributes) –

(i) **Omnipotent** (Gen. 1:1; Gen. 17:1; Job. 40:2; Amo. 4:13; Mat. 19:26) (ii) **Omnipresent** (Gen. 28:15-16; Psa. 139:7-10) (iii) **Omniscient** (Gen. 18:18-19; 2Ki. 8:10-13; Jer. 1:4-5; Rom. 8:27-29; 1Pe. 1:2) (iv) **Wise** (Psa. 104:24; Pro. 3:19; Jer. 10:12; Dan. 2:20-21; Col. 2:2-3) (v) **Sovereign** (Dan. 4:35; Mat. 20:15; Rom. 9:21)

c. God in Relation to Moral Creatures (Moral Attributes) (i) **Holy** (Exo. 15:11; Lev. 11:44-45; Rev. 4:8)

(ii) **Righteous** (Ezr. 9:15; Psa. 116:5; Rev. 16:15)

(iii) **Faithful** (Exo. 34:6; Mic. 7:20; 2Ti. 2:13; Rev. 15:3) (iv) **Merciful** (Tit. 3:5; Psa. 32:5) (v) **Love** (Deu. 7:8; Joh. 3:16; 1Jo. 4:9-10) (vi) **Good** (Psa. 25:8; Psa. 85:5; Act. 14:17)

TRINITY

I. Essential Elements of Trinity

1. God is One.
2. Each of the persons within the Godhead is Deity.
3. The oneness of God and the threeness of God are not contradictions.
4. The Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is eternal.
5. Each of the persons of God is of the same essence and is not inferior or superior to the others in essence.
6. The Trinity is a mystery which we will never be able to understand fully.

II. Natural Illustrations 1x1x1=1 (Nathan Wood)

1. Length x Breadth x Height = Space
2. Energy x Motion x Phenomenon = Matter
3. Future x Present x Past = Time
4. Space x Matter x Time = Universe
5. Nature x Person x Personality = Man

III. Philosophical Rationality of Trinity

1. Provides the rational-eternal basis for moral categories - If God was not a Trinity, then categories such as love, joy, and goodness couldn't be absolute.
2. Provides the rational-empirical basis for epistemic categories - if God was not a Trinity, then the knowledge as a subject-object relationship, as analytic-synthetic distinction, and Truth as such couldn't find an original ground.

3. Provides the relational basis for interpersonal relationships. Therefore, Christ could pray regarding His disciples, "that they may be one, as We are" (Joh. 17:11).
4. Provides the metaphysical ground for a pluralist reality, and unity in diversity of the uni-verse.

III. Scriptural Proofs

Deu. 6:4; Psalms. 2:7; Heb. 1:13; Psalms. 68:18; Isa. 6:1-3; Isa. 9:6; Gen. 1:2; 1Ti. 1:17; 1Co. 8:4-6; 1Pe. 1:2; Joh. 1:17; Phi. 2:11; Mat. 3:16-17; Act. 5:3-4

IV. False Views of Trinity

1. Unitarianism – Father is creator, Son is creature, Spirit is impersonal.
2. Sabellianism – (Modalism) Father (OT), Son (NT), Spirit (Present).
3. Tritheism – Father, Son, and H.S. are three distinct gods.

CHRISTOLOGY (JESUS CHRIST)

I. Nature

1. The Son of God – Deity
2. The Word – Preexistence & Activity
3. Lord - Sovereignty
4. The Son of Man – Humanity
5. The Christ – Official Title and Mission
6. Son of David – Royal Lineage

II. Offices

Prophet – Mar. 6:15; Joh. 4:19; Joh. 6:14; Joh. 9:17

Priest – Heb. 2:14-16; Heb. 8:3; Eph. 1:6

King – Gen. 14:18-19; Heb. 7:1-3; Psalms. 110:1-4; Zec. 6:13

III. Work Mat. 1:21; Joh. 1:29; 1Co. 15:1-3

IV. The 2nd Person

Co-Eternal, Co-Substantial, Co-Equal With Each Of The Person Of Trinity (Nicea 345 AD)

Christ's Two Natures: Unmixed, Unchanged, Undivided, Inseparable. (Chalcedon 451 AD)

V. Christological Heresies (in bold, acceptable)

1. Ebionism – Denied deity and pre-existence of Christ.
2. Docetism – Denied His humanity; affirmed His deity; Jesus appeared human but was really divine.
3. Arianism – Denied deity; Christ was the first and highest created being *homoiousia*, not *homoousia*. **He is subordinate to the Father.**
4. Appollinarianism – Denied human spirit of Jesus. The divine Logos took the place of the human mind. **Affirmed Christ's deity and real humanness** (not complete humanness).
5. Nestorianism – Denied union of natures, the unity of Christ's person. The union was moral, not organic- thus two persons. The human was completely controlled by the divine. **Distinguished human Jesus, who died, from Divine Son, who cannot die.**
6. Eutychianism – Denied distinction of natures; **monophysitist**; the human nature was swallowed by the divine to create a new third nature. **Maintained the unity of Christ's person.**

VI. Kenosis – Phi. 2:7: Lit. to empty oneself, KJV: 'made himself of no reputation,' i.e., to take the form of servant, of man. The context means that Christ being the Son of God chose to stoop down to live a life of a servant, and being tested and found obedient in all, is now exalted above all creatures as the One in whom the will of God is finally accomplished; He is the embodiment and finality of divine will; and, therefore, worthy of rulership and judgment. Christ lost neither the divine consciousness nor the divine attributes, neither did he withdraw from divine activity in the kenotic event.

Other Kenotic Theories

1. Christ emptied Himself of Divine Nature.
2. Christ emptied Himself of Eternal Form (which He exchanged for a temporal one).
3. Christ emptied Himself of relative attributes, namely omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence.
4. Christ emptied Himself of the integrity of infinite divine existence. The Logos became assumed dual consciousness at incarnation: the divine continued apart from the human, while the human was unaware of the cosmic functions of Deity.
5. Christ emptied Himself of divine activity by turning over all His duties to the Father.
6. Christ emptied Himself of the actual exercise of divine prerogatives. He retained His divine consciousness but renounced the conditions of infinity and its form.

Sub-Kenotic Theories

1. Christ emptied Himself of the use of divine attributes though possessing them. He chose not to use them.
2. Christ emptied Himself of the independent exercise of the divine attributes. He worked in submission to the Father.
3. Christ emptied Himself of the insignia of Majesty, the prerogatives of deity, the outward form of deity.

VII. The Person of Christ

1. **Preincarnate – Pre-existence** (Joh. 1:1; 1Jo. 1:1; Joh. 17:5). **Participation in creation** (Gen. 1:26; Pro. 8:30; Col. 1:15; Joh. 1:3; Col. 1:16; 1Co. 8:6). **Christophanies** (Gen.18,19; Hos.1:7; Gen.22,31; Exo. 3:2; Exo. 14:19; Num. 22:22; Judg.6).
2. **Divine Nature – Divine Attributes** (eternal-Joh. 1:1; Joh. 8:58; Joh. 17:5; omnipresent- Mat. 28:20; Eph. 1:23; omniscient- Jn.16:30;21:17; omnipotent- Jn.5:19; immutable- Heb. 1:12; Heb. 13:8). **Divine Offices** (Creator- Joh 1:3; Col 1:16; Sustainer- Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3). **Divine Prerogatives** (forgives sin – Mat. 9:2; Luk. 7:47; raises dead- Joh. 5:25; Joh. 11:25; executes judgement- Joh. 5:22). **Identified with OT YHWH - I AM** (Joh. 8:58; Joh. 12:41; Joh. 8:24; Joh. 8:50-58). **Divine Names** (Alpha & Omega-Rev. 22:13; I AM –Joh. 8:58; Immanuel- Mat. 1:22; Lord-Mat. 7:21; Son of God- Joh. 10:36; God- Joh. 1:1; 2Pe. 1:1; Tit. 2:13; 1Jo. 5:20). **Divine Relations** (Image of God- Col. 1:15; Hb.1:3; One with Father- Joh. 10:30). **Accepts Divine Worship** (Mat. 14:33; Mat. 28:9; Joh. 20:28-29). **Claims to be God** (Jn.8:58; Joh. 10:30; Joh. 17:5 – in such case, He is either *liar, lunatic, or the Lord* that He claims to be, but never can be regarded as merely a good moral teacher).
3. **Human Nature – Human Birth** (Mat. 1:18; Mat. 2:11). **Human Development** (Luk. 2:50-52). **Essential Elements of Human Nature** (Human body – Mat. 26:12; Joh. 2:21; Reason & will – Mat. 26:38; Mar. 2:8). **Human Names** (Jesus -Mat. 1:21; Son of Man- Mat. 8:20; Mat. 11:18; Son of Abraham- Mat. 1:1; Son of David- Mt.1:1). **Sinless Infirmities of Human Nature** (weariness-Joh. 4:6; hunger- Mat. 4:2; Mat. 21:18; thirst- Joh. 19:28; temptation- Mt. 4; Heb. 2:18). **Repeatedly Called a Man** (Joh. 1:30; Joh. 4:9; Joh. 10:38).
4. **Union of Natures – Theanthropic** – The person of Christ is theanthropic; He has two natures, divine and human, in one person. **Personal** – Hypostatic union, constituting one personal substance: two natures but one person. **Includes the Human and Divine Qualities and Acts** – Both the human and divine qualities and acts may be ascribed to Christ under either of His natures. **Constant Presence of Both Humanity and Divinity**- His natures cannot be separated.
5. **Character – Absolutely Holy** (His human nature was created holy –Luk. 1:35; He committed no sin – 1Pe. 2:22; He always pleased the Father- Joh. 2:22). **Possesses Genuine Love** (Laid down His life – Joh. 15:13; His love surpasses all knowledge- Eph. 3:19). **Truly Humble** – Phi. 2:5-8. **Meek**- Mat. 11:29. **Balanced** – 'He was grave without being melancholy. He was joyful without being frivolous.' **Prayerful** – Mat. 14:23; Luk. 6:12). **Incessant Worker** – Joh. 5:17; Joh. 9:4). **Stern** (Mat. 16:33; Mat. 23:13-36). **Wise** (Mat. 22:19; Joh. 2:24; Joh. 7:1). **Compassionate** (Mat. 14:14; Mat. 15:32; Mat. 20:34).

VIII. Impeccability of Christ

Definitions: **Peccability** – Christ could sin; **Impeccability** – Christ could not sin. **Questions:** If Jesus could not sin, how could He be truly human? Vs. If Jesus could sin, how could He be truly divine?

Points of Agreement: *Christ's temptations were real* (Heb. 4:15); *Christ experienced struggle* (Mat. 26:36-46); *Christ did not sin* (2Co. 5:21; Heb. 7:26; Jam. 5:6; 1Pe. 2:22; 1Pe. 3:18).

Conclusion – Impeccability : Temptation implies possibility of sin in general (humans) but not in specific (Christ). For instance, the testing of gold implies the possibility of things not being gold in general, but not the possibility of pure gold not being pure gold. The end of testing gold is to distinguish true gold from false gold. Thus, Christ's not falling in sin proves He could not sin. Since, Jesus is God and sin is rebellion against God, Jesus could not sin, for it is impossible for Him to rebel against Himself, unless His omniscience and omnipotence were brought into question. Thus, being human, He was tempted, but being divine and undivided in His moral nature, He was essentially holy and so could not sin.

PNEUMATOLOGY (HOLY SPIRIT)

I. Nature

Names.

Spirit of God – Person, Executive of the Godhead

Spirit of CHRIST. Rom. 8:9 – Sent in Christ's Name (Jn.14:26; Joh. 16:14; Mat. 18:20; Rom. 8:9-10)

Comforter – Jn. 14:17

Holy Spirit of the Holy One. Sanctification

Holy Spirit of the Promise – Luk. 24:49; Eze. 36:27; Gal. 3:14

Spirit of Truth – Joh. 14:17

Spirit of Glory – 1Pe. 4:14

Spirit of Grace – Heb. 10:29

Spirit of Wisdom & Knowledge Isa. 11:2

Spirit of Life – Rom. 8:2; Rev. 11:11

Spirit of Adoption – Rom. 8:13

Symbols

Fire – Isa. 4:4; Mat. 3:11

Wind – Eze. 37:7-10; Joh. 3:8; Act. 2:2

Water – Eze. 17:6; Joh. 3:5; Joh. 4:14; Joh. 7:38,39

Seal – Eph. 1:13; 2Ti. 2:19

Oil - Psa. 92:10; Luk. 4:18; Act. 10:38; 1Jo. 2:20

Dove– Mat. 3:16-17;

II. Personality

3rd person of the Godhead – Mat. 3:16-17; Joh. 14:16

Has knowledge – Isa. 11:2; Rom. 8:27

Has feeling – Isa. 63:10; Eph. 4:30

Has will – 1Co. 12:11

III. Attributes

1. Is Divine (Act. 5:3-4)

2. Eternal (Heb. 9:14)

3. Omnipresent (Psa. 139:7)

4. Omniscient (Joh. 14:26; Joh. 16:13)

IV. Works

1. Active in Creation (Gen. 1:2; Job. 33:4; Psa. 104:30).

2. Inspired the Bible Writers (2Pe. 1:21).

3. Empowered the conception of Christ (Luk. 1:35).

4. Convicts of sin (Joh. 16:8; Gen. 6:3).

5. Regenerates (Jn. 3:5-6).

6. Counsels (Joh. 14:16-17; Joh. 16:7-14).

7. Brings assurance of salvation (Rom. 8:15).
8. Teaches or enlightens (Joh. 16:12-14; 1Co. 2:13).
9. Aids in prayer (Rom. 8:26-27).
10. Resurrected Christ (Rom. 8:11; 1Pe. 3:18).
11. Calls to service (Act. 13:4).
12. Seals the elect's salvation (Rom. 8:23; 2Co. 1:21-22; Eph. 1:13-14; Eph. 4:30).
13. Indwells the believer (Rom. 8:19; 1Co. 3:16-17; 1Co. 6:19).
14. Works in the church (1Co. 12:7-11).

V. Baptism in the Holy Spirit

It's a promise of the Father (Act. 1:3).

It's a promise of Jesus (Jn. 16).

Baptizer – Jesus Christ (Mat. 3:11)

Initial Sign – Speaking in Tongues (Act. 2, 10)

Meaning – Anointing, Filling, Being immersed

Results – Power, boldness, guidance, miracles, gifts of the Spirit

Means – Faith (Gal. 3:14), Laying of Hands (Act 8)

Prerequisites – Salvation, Desire, Prayer, Expectancy, Water Baptism

VI. Gifts of the Spirit (1 Co. 12)

Gifts of Power – Faith, Healing, Miracles

Gifts of Knowledge – Word of Kn. W/Wisdom, Discern./spirits

Gifts of Speech – Tongues, Interpretation, Prophecy

VII. Fruit of Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23)

VIII. Offences Against the Spirit

1. Resisting the Spirit (Act. 7:51)
2. Insulting the Spirit (Heb. 10:29)
3. Blaspheming (Mat. 12:31-32)
4. Grieving (Eph. 4:30-31)
5. Lying (Act. 5:3)
6. Quenching (1Th. 5:19).

CREATION

I. Theories of Creation

Evolutionism, Deism, Dualism, Non-Dualism, Polytheism, Pantheism, Materialism, Panentheism.

II. Origin of Creation

1. The Six Days of Creation (Gen. 1, 2; Exo. 20:11)

False Views: Gap Theory, Progressive Creationism, & Theistic Evolutionism- None of them have support from traditional hermeneutical history nor explicit Biblical support (except recourse to jumble of words and out-of-context interpretations) nor authoritative support from scientific discoveries or theories.

2. Creatio ex nihilo – Creation out of nothing (Heb. 11:3). The world, therefore, is basically nothing in itself and by itself.

3. Free Creation – God didn't create the world out of necessity, but of His own free and sovereign will.

4. Creation of Darkness – Darkness is not co-eternal with God and, therefore, a created reality (Isa. 45:7).

5. Creation of Space-time- God is not contained by space, neither does He move in time; space and time are physical dimensions (conditions) of material objects and are part of creation. It is, therefore, false to conceptualize a spatio-temporal God. Creation of Time (Psa. 90:2 – 'or ever thou hadst formed {Hb.

Chul- to rotate, spin} the earth and the world').

6. Creation of Life- biological (flora and fauna). Unconscious and world-conscious creation.

7. Creation of Humans- rational, moral, volitional, spiritual. Self-conscious and God-conscious.

III. Nature of Creation

1. Spatio-Temporality: Linear Time; Space & Time are physical dimensions.
2. Contingency: Dependent on God
3. Plurality
4. Finitude
5. Uniformity: The Laws Of Nature
6. Open – the universe is not a closed system but open, and so miracles are possible.

IV. Purpose of Creation (Three Views)

1. Anthropo-centricity – Man is at the center of creation and all is for him, the view of humanism.
2. Eco-centricity – Life (flora & fauna) is at the center of creation and eco-balance is necessary for sustenance of earth as habitat of life.
3. Christo-centricity – Christ is the center of creation and all is by Him, through Him, and for Him (Col. 1:16), 'that in all things He might have the pre-eminence' (Col. 1:18), to bring all things under the headship of Christ (Eph. 1:10).

V. Man's Relation to Creation

1. Man is to have dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:26; Psa. 115:16).
2. Man is steward of God's creation (Gen. 2:5,15).
3. After Fall, nature turned hostile to man (Gen. 3:18).
4. Man was to rule by fear and violence; the age of innocence had ceased (Gen. 9:2-3).

Non-biblical Relations

1. Pantheism – Man is equal to all creation.
2. Asceticism – Physical world is man's enemy.
3. Utilitarianism – Man exploits nature.

VI. Divine Providence – The doctrine that God has not only created the world but also sustains it.

1. God is the reason behind the uniformity of the laws of nature (Job 38).
2. God rules over the world and controls its processes by wisdom and power (Job. 38:41; 39; Exo. 3:20; Job. 9:10; Psa. 77:14).

VII. Problem of Evil – Theodicy – If God is both powerful and good then why is there evil in the world?

Non-dualism – Evil is an illusion.

Pantheism – Evil is part of the world.

Dualism – Good and Evil and two eternal forces.

Evolutionism – Evil is part of the struggle for existence.

The Biblical Answer – Evil is the result of Adam's disobedience, whereby sin and death entered the world, sicknesses and demonic forces ran rampant ravaging human lives. God's answer is Christ by whom evil is conquered and the Kingdom of righteousness inaugurated. This is done through the atonement, whereby men are saved, and finalized at the second coming when salvation will be complete and justice fully dealt.

ANGELOLOGY (ANGELS)

I. Nature of Angels

1. Creatures (Rev. 19:10; Rev. 22:8-9; Col. 2:18)
2. Spirits (Heb. 1:14)

3. Immortal (Luk. 20:34-36)
4. Numerous (Dan. 7:10; Mat. 26:53; Luk. 2:13; Heb. 12:22)
5. Sexless (Lk. 20:34-35)

II. Classification (1Pe. 3:22; Col. 1:16; Eph. 1:20-21)

1. The Angel of the Lord (Exo. 23:20-23, 32,34; Isa. 63:9)
2. The Archangel: Michael (Jud. 1:9, Rev. 12:7); Gabriel (Luk. 1:19; Dan. 8:16; Dan. 9:21)
3. Elect Angels – Stood true during Satan's rebellion (1Ti. 5:21)
4. Angels of the Nations (Dan. 10:13,20; Eph. 3:10; Col. 2:15)
5. Cherubim – Connected with God's retributive (Gen. 3:24) and redemptive purposes (Exo. 25:22)
6. Seraphim – 'Burning Ones' (Isa. 6)

III. Character

1. Obedient (Psa. 103:20; Jud. 1:6; 1Pe. 3:22)
2. Reverent (Neh. 9:6; Heb. 1:6)
3. Wise (2Sa. 14:17; 1Ki. 8:39; 1Pe. 1:12)
4. Meek (2Pe. 2:11; Jud. 1:9)
5. Mighty (Psa. 103:20)
6. Holy (Rev. 14:10)

IV. Work

1. God's Agents – Executors of God's decree of judgments (Gen. 3:24; Mat. 13:39-41, 49; 2Ki. 19:35; Act. 12:23)
2. God's Messengers (angels) – (Lk. 11:20; Mat. 1:20,21; Gen. 28:12; Rev. 1:1)
3. God's Servants (Heb. 1:14; Mat. 4:11; Gen. 16:7; Psa. 103:20)

V. Classification 2

1. Ministering Spirits
2. Warring Angels
3. Worshipping Angels
4. Messenger Angels

DEMONOLOGY (DEMONS)

SATAN

I. Origin (Isa. 14:12-15; Eze. 28:12-19)

II. Character

Adversary (Satan), Slanderer (Devil), Destroyer (Apollyon), Serpent, Tempter, Prince and God of this world (Joh. 12:31; 2Co. 4:4, 1Jo. 5:19; 1Jo. 2:16); Father of lies (Joh. 8:44); wicked one (Mat. 13:19)

III. Activities

A. Nature

1. Opposes God's work (1Th. 2:18; Mat. 13:19; 2Co. 4:4)
2. Snares the wicked (Luk. 22:3; Rev. 20:7-8)
3. Presumptuous (Mat. 4:4-5);
4. Proud (1Ti. 3:6)
5. Powerful (Eph. 2:2);
6. Malignant (Job. 2:4)
7. Subtle (Gen. 3:1; 2Co. 11:3)
8. Deceitful (Eph. 6:11)
9. Fierce and Cruel (1Pe. 5:8)
10. Can cause physical illness (Job. 2:7)

- B. Sphere – Highest Circles** (Eph. 2:2)
- C. Motives – Intent on our ruin** (Joh. 10:10)
- D. Limitations – Only with God's permission – Time Limited** (Rev. 12:12)
- E. Destiny – (Gen. 3:15; Rev. 12:9; Rev. 20:10; Mat. 25:41)**

DEMONS

Gr. *Daimon, daimonion* – fallen spirits

I. Description: angels who fell with Satan (Mat. 12:24), divided into two groups: one group is active in opposing God's people (Rev. 9:14; Rev. 16:14) and another is confined in prison (2Pe. 2:4; Jud. 1:6), intelligent (Mar. 1:24), know their doom (Mat. 8:29), have their own doctrine (1Ti. 4:1-3).

II. Pictures: Scavenger Birds (Rev. 18:1-2) – unclean and dirty; Frogs (Rev. 16:13-14) – living in dark regions; Locusts and Scorpions (Rev. 9:2-3, 7-10) – torturing men; Serpents and Vipers (Luk. 3:7) – totally, morally depraved in character.

III. Activities: Seek to hinder God's plan (Dan. 10:10-14; Rev. 16:13-16); inflict illnesses (Mat. 9:33; Luk. 13:11-16), possess animals (Mar. 5:13), promote false doctrine (1Ti. 4:1); influence nations (Isa. 14; Eze. 28; Dan. 10:13; Rev. 16:13-14); possess unbelievers (Mat. 9:32-33; Mat. 10:18; Mar. 6:13).

IV. Limitations: Limited by place like unfallen angels (Mat. 17:18; Mar. 9:25), are used by God for His purposes when He desires (1Sa. 16:14; 2Co. 12:7); may be expelled and return back to the one from who exorcized (Luk. 11:24-26).

V. Destiny: Will be cast along with Satan into lake of fire forever (Mat. 25:41).

VI. Expelling Demons

1. As a believer, you have Christ-given authority to cast demons (Mat. 10:1,8; Mar. 16:17). It is Christ's power, not yours. You're only safe in Christ.
2. Christ cast them out by the Spirit of God (Mt. 12:28).
3. Prayer, fasting and total submission to God is required (Mar. 9:29; Jam. 4:7).
4. Pray for the gift of discerning the spirits (1Co. 12:10).
5. Do not talk with demons, as a general rule (Mar. 1:24). They are deceivers.
6. Cast them out in the Name of Jesus (Act. 16:18).
7. Do not close your eyes when casting out demons: you are commanding, not praying; demons are sometimes seen to be physically violent (Mat. 17:15; Act. 19:15,16).
8. Do not allow the demon to weaken your faith in God, His Word, and the power of Christ's Holy Spirit.
9. In every deliverance session, there must be order and discipline among the servants of God; let one minister in authority while the rest back him/her in prayer.
10. All amulets, charms, fetishes, and occultic objects must be removed before any deliverance can take place. The possession of such things provide strongholds for demonic oppression. (Act. 19:19).
11. The delivered must be guided into confession, repentance, belief, and the infilling of the Holy Spirit to avoid serious consequences of demonic return (Mat. 12:44,45). A life of holiness and keeping in the will of God is imperative (1Jo. 5:18).

VII. Can Believers be Demon-Possessed?

1. A believer can never be demon-possessed since his body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and has no room for demons (1Cor. 6:19; 1Cor. 10:21).
2. Christians must guard themselves against demonic wisdom (Jam. 3:13-16; Act. 5:1-4; 1Ti. 4:1-5).
3. Christians must be sober-minded, watch and pray (1Pe. 5:8).
4. Christians must resist the devil being steadfast in faith (1Pe. 5:9; Jam. 4:7) by the blood of Christ and obedience to God's Word (Rev. 12:11; Mat. 4:4). Know that Jesus is with you (Mt. 28:20).
5. Do not give place to the devil. Watch your words, temper, actions, and relationships (Eph. 4:26,27; 2Co. 2:10,11).

6. Live a Spirit-filled life (Luk. 4:1,14; Jud. 1:20-23; Eph. 6:10ff).

ANTHROPOLOGY (MAN)

I. Origin Gen. 1, 2

II. Nature

Body – 2Co. 5:1; Dan. 7:15

Soul – Intellect, Will, Emotion

Spirit – Num. 16:22; Num. 27:16 Intuition, Conscience, Communion

III. Imago Dei

1. Kinship with God

2. Moral Character

3. Reason

4. Capacity for Immortality

5. Dominion over the Earth

At Fall the image of God in man has been marred but not erased (Gen. 9:6; 1Co. 11:7; Jam. 3:9). Man has not lost his freedom of will and power of reasoning. However, they have been severely depraved by sin. Therefore, without the work of the Holy Spirit no man can be saved. No man can climb uphill to God (Ex. 20:26). God, in Christ, and through the Spirit, meets man where he is and reconciles him to Himself (Rom. 5:8; Gal. 5:16; 1Co. 12:3).

IV. Original Sin

Pelagianism – Man's soul is created by God at birth and so is free from hereditary corruption.

Arminianism – Man receives from Adam a corrupted nature but does not receive Adam's guilt. This nature is corrupted physically and intellectually, but not volitionally. Prevenient grace enables man to believe.

Calvinism – **2 Views: Federal Headship** (creationist view of origin of the soul) – The individual receives the physical nature from parents. God creates each soul. Adam was representative of all humanity and thus, when he sinned all humanity sinned. **Natural Headship** (traducianist view of origin of soul-Augustine) – The individual receives the physical nature and the soul from the parents. Thus, all people were present in Adam in germinal or seminal form. Each individual participates in the sin of Adam. Thus, each individual inherits Adam's sin.

Conclusion: Humanity suffers death as physically (naturally) born of Adam (natural headship); Christians receive eternal life as a gift, by faith, being born, not physically but, spiritually (spiritual headship of Christ) (1Co. 15:45-50; Joh. 1:13; Joh. 3:5,6; 1Pe. 1:23).

ATONEMENT

I. Atonement in Old Testament

Origin of Sacrifice

1. **Ordained in Heaven.** Rev. 13:8; Exo. 12:3,6; 1Pe. 1:19,20; Tit. 1:2; Act. 2:23

2. **Instituted on Earth.** Gen.3; Rev. 5:6-10

Mosaic Sacrifices – Law

OT Sacrifices good; NT Sacrifices CHRIST – Better (Heb. 10:17,18)

II. Atonement in New Testament

Atonement 'to cover' (Heb. *Kaphar*; Gk. *Katallage*) – Exchange, reconciliation, ransom, substitute, covering. (Jer. 18:23; Isa. 6:7; Psal. 32:1)

Propitiation 'removal of wrath' Rom. 3:25; removal of enmity, **Expiation** – removal of sins

Substitution Isa. 53:5; 2Co. 5:21; 1Pe. 2:24

Redemption 'buy back by payment, release from bondage by paying a price' (Mat. 20:28; Rev. 5:9; Rev. 14:3,4; Gal. 3:13; Gal. 4:5; Tit. 2:14; 1Pe. 1:28)

Reconciliation 2Co. 5:18,19; Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:21; removal of enmity

Efficacy

1. **Pardon.** Joh. 1:29; Eph. 1:7; Rev. 1:5; Joh. 5:24; Heb. 9:22-28
2. **Freedom.** Rom. 6:14; Tit. 3:5-7
3. **Deliverance from Death.** 2Co. 5:21; Joh. 11:26; Rom. 8:10,27
4. **Life Eternal.** Tit. 1:2; Rom. 6:22
5. **Victorious Life.** Rev. 7:14; Gal. 2:20; Rev. 12:11

SOTERIOLOGY (SALVATION)

I. Nature

3 Aspects:

1. **Justification – Courtroom scene – declaration as righteous.**
2. **Regeneration (inward experience) – Adoption (outward privilege) – Household scene**
3. **Sanctification – Temple scene (Luk. 2:37).**

Subjective and Objective Aspects

1. **Objective Aspect** – Provided by the atoning work of Christ – Justification, adoption
2. **Subjective Aspect** – The work of the Holy Spirit – Effectual calling, conversion, regeneration, sanctification.

On the cross 'Christ procured for us salvation; the Holy Spirit produces in us salvation.' Watchman Nee

II. Justification – Rom. 4:25

1. Declared (not made) righteous – imputation of Christ's righteousness and restoration to God's favor (Rom. 3:22; Rom. 5:17; Rom. 13:21)
2. Change in standing
3. Removal of penalty. Rom. 4:7; 2Co. 5:19; Rom. 8:1
4. Forgiveness of sins. Col. 2:12,13
5. Ground – Blood (Death) of Christ. Rom. 5:9; Rom. 4:5; Rom. 3:25.
6. Means – Faith. Rom. 3:34-35
7. Spring – Grace. Rom. 3:24
8. Proof – Resurrection. Rom. 4:25

III. Regeneration – New Birth

1. New Creation – 1Co. 5:17; Joh. 3:3-7; Gal. 6:15; 1Ti. 3:5
2. New & Divine Life – Joh. 3:3-7; Eph. 2:15; 1Jo. 5:24; Rom. 6:24; Jam. 1:8; Col. 2:12,13
3. New Nature – 2Pe. 1:4; Mar. 2:21,22; 1Jo. 2:9; Col. 3:10
4. New & Divine Impulse – Act. 26:19-22

IV. Adoption (Huiiothesia – 'placing as son')

Blessings

Family Name. 1Jo. 3:1; Eph. 3:14,15
Family Likeness. Rom. 8:29
Family Love. Joh. 13:35
Family Spirit. Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:13
Family Service. Joh. 14:23,24; Joh. 15:8

We Receive

Chastisement. Heb. 12:5-11
Comfort. 2Co. 1:4; Isa. 66:13

Inheritance. Rom. 8:17; 1Pe. 1:3-5

Privileges

Child-like confidence. Gal. 4:5-11

Boldness, Access. Eph. 3:12

Fellowship of the Brethren. Eph. 2:19; Eph. 3:6; Col. 1:7; Col. 2:25; Rom. 16:7; Col. 4:10; Phm. 1:24

V. Sanctification. Holiness 'set apart'

Implications

Separation from the world

Dedication to God

Steps

Positional. 1Co. 6:11; Heb. 10:14

Progressive. Gal. 4:19; 2Co. 3:18; 1Pe. 2:2; Eph. 4:15; 1Pe. 1:14-15; Gal. 3:3

Prospective. Perfect. 1Jo. 3:2

Other Views of Sanctification

1. Wesleyan: Sanctification as 2nd Work of Grace that is result of total surrender and faith in the Holy Spirit and means perfection in love.

2. Keswick: Sanctification is a distinctive experience that marks the point where the defeated Christian is transformed into a victorious Christian in a total surrender and consecration to God captured in the phrase 'Let Go and Let God.'

3. Reformed: Sanctification is growth in holiness through spiritual disciplines.

4. Chaferian: At the point of conversion, Christ is accepted **as Savior** and a natural man becomes a believer, though being a carnal man; at sanctification, the carnal man accepts Christ **as Lord** and becomes a spiritual man.

ECCLESIOLOGY (CHURCH)

I. Nature

1. Name – *Ekklesia* – an assembly of called out ones

Kuriake – that which belongs to the Lord

2. Christians are called – brethren, believers, saints, elect, disciples, Christians, those of the Way (Ac. 9:2)

3. Illustrations

The Body of Christ (1Co. 10:16; 1Co. 12:27)

The Temple of God (1Pe 2:5,6; Eph 2:21,22; 1Co 3:16,17)

The Bride of Christ (1Co. 11:2; Eph 5:25-27; Rev. 19:7)

II. Founding

1. The Rock (Mat. 16:18) – The Confession of Jesus being the Son of the living God (His Being) and the Christ of God (His Work – Ministerial Title)

2. Eph. 2:20 – Apostles & Prophets (Christ – The Corner/Cap Stone)

III. Membership – By faith in Christ and obedience in Water Baptism

IV. The Work of the Church

1. Evangelisation – Mat. 28:19-20

2. Edification – Eph. 4:7-16

3. Exaltation – Worship – 1Pe. 2:5-10

V. Ordinances

1. Baptism

Mode: Immersion

Formula: Mat. 28:19

Recipient: Believer (Mar. 16:16)

Efficiency: Public Acceptance

Meaning: Pictures of Salvation, Experience of Death & Resurrection with Christ, Regeneration

2. Lord's Supper

Commemoration of Christ's Death: New Covenant

Looking Forward to His Coming

ESCHATOLOGY (LAST THINGS)

The Bible teaches us that all moral beings will be brought to judgment before God in the Last Day of the world. Jesus gave the signs that precede the coming of this Last Day. They are: an increase of apostasy, of false prophets, the coming of the anti-Christ who will persecute the people of God and politically control the world, wars, earthquakes, famines, growing crime rates, rise of cults, and signs in outer space among many things (Matt. 24). After these things, the Son of God will appear in the sky with His mighty angels (2Thess.1:7). He will appear this second time for the salvation of His people and the judgment of the world (Heb.9:28). The dead in Christ will rise first and those disciples who are living will be caught up to Lord to be with Him forever (1Thess.4:16,17). The devil and his angels will be punished in hell (Matt.25:41; Rev.20:10). Those whose names are not written in the Book of life will be thrown into the Lake of fire (Rev.20:15) because they will be judged according to their deeds (Rom.2:5,6; Jude 15). The faithful in Christ will inherit the Kingdom of God (Rev.21:7)

I. Key Terms to the Second Coming of Christ

Parousia – 1Th. 3:13; 1Th. 4:15; lit. 'being by' 'presence'

Apocalypse – 1Co. 1:7; 2Th. 1:6-7; 1Pe. 4:13; lit. 'revelation'

Epiphany – 1Ti. 6:14; 2Ti. 4:8; Tit. 2:13-14; lit. 'appearance'

II. Rapture: Pre-tribulation- Christ will come for His saints before the 7-year. trib. period; afterward He will come with His saints. The first stage is Rapture; the second, Revelation.

Other Views: Partial Rapture – only believers who are watching and waiting for the Lord will be raptured at various times before and during the 7-year. trib. **Mid-tribulation** – the church is raptured in the middle of the tribulation period, prior to the Great Tribulation. **Post-tribulation** – living believers are to be raptured at the second coming of Christ, which will occur at the end of the Tribulation.

DANIEL'S 70 WEEKS (DAN. 9:24-27)

Formula: 1 Week = 7 Years (Gen. 29:7)

"Going forth of the commandment" – March 14, 445 B.C.
(Neh. 2:5)

"After 62 weeks shall Messiah be cut off." – April 06, A.D. 32
(Mat. 21)

62+7 = 69 Weeks (Dan. 9:25) x 7 x 360 days = 173,880 days
(Jewish Calendar)

March 14, 445 – April 06, 32 = 173,880 days (Our Calendar)

The Final Week (7 years of Tribulation) when the Anti-Christ
will be revealed is the 70th week (Dan. 9:27).

Signs – Mt. 24: Wars, False Teachers, Persecution, Apostasy, Callousness, Return of Jews, Restoration of land (Isa. 35:1); Trees plantation (Eze. 36:30); Inhabiting desolate cities (Isa. 54:3); Federation of Nations (Dan.2:44), etc.

III. Millenium. Various Theories: Dispensational Premillennialism – Christ's revelation (2nd phase of 2nd Coming) will be followed by a literal 1,000 years. of reign on earth during which time the Abrahamic

covenant will be completely fulfilled in Israel (Gen. 12:1-3). Its outworking is seen in the Palestinian, Davidic, and new covenants. The church shares the blessings of the new covenant, but does not fulfill its promises (Gal. 3:16). **Historic, Classical, and Nondispensational Premillennialism** – The rapture will occur at Christ's second coming and will be followed by an earthly kingdom of Christ. Church goes through the future Tribulation. Millenium is both present and future. Christ is reigning in heaven. Millenium not necessarily 1,000 years. **Postmillennialism** – The kingdom of God is now extended through teaching, preaching, evangelization, and missionary activities. Tribulation is experienced now. The world is to be Christianized and followed by a long period of peace and prosperity called the Millenium. This would be followed by Christ's return. **Amillennialism or Realized Millennialism** – There is no literal Millenium on earth after 2nd coming. The kingdom of God is now present in the world through His Word, His Spirit, His Church. Christ's return is a single event. Tribulation is experienced in this present age. Church is the new Israel.

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